CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILISATION

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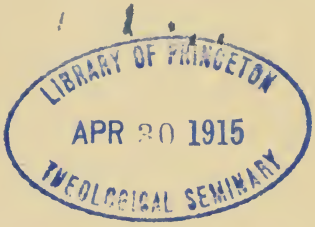


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# CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILISATION

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# CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILISATION

FIVE LECTURES DELIVERED AT
ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL
LONDON

BY

THE LATE R. W. CHURCH, M.A., D.C.L.
DEAN OF PAUL'S, HONORARY FELLOW OF ORIEL

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# CIVILISATION

# BEFORE AND AFTER CHRISTIANITY

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TWO LECTURES

DELIVERED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

AT THE

TUESDAY EVENING SERVICES

*January* 23*rd and* 30*th*, 1872

# LECTURE I

## ROMAN CIVILISATION

I PROPOSE to bring before your thoughts, in fulfilment of my part in this series of lectures, the subject of Civilisation—first, as it was, in probably its highest form before Christian times, in the Roman State; and next, as it has been since Christianity has influenced the course of history and the conditions of human life. In doing this, I have to remember several things. I have to remember the vastness of the field before us, the huge mass of materials, the number, difficulty, and importance of the questions which arise out of the subject, or hang on it. I have to remember that civilisation is a thing of more or less, and that general statements about it are ever liable to be misunderstood or excepted to, because the speaker is thinking of one phase or degree of it, and the listener and critic is thinking of another. One may have his thoughts full of its triumphs, and the other of its failures and shameful blots. I have to remember that it is a subject which has tasked the powers and filled

the volumes of learned, able, and copious writers—Montesquieu, Guizot, Buckle, to name only these, who have made it their special theme—and that they have left much unsaid, much unsettled, about it. And I have to remember that I have only two short lectures —circumstances have made this necessary — to say what I can say about it. Perhaps for what I have to say it is enough. But, with such a subject, I should gladly have had more time both for preparation and for discourse.

We who pursue our business in this great city, we who come to hear or to worship in this great cathedral, have continually before our eyes, in some of its most striking and characteristic forms, a very complex but very distinctive fact in the conditions of human existence—the vast complex fact to which we give the name of *civilisation*. It is, we all know, a vague and elastic word, and I am not going to be so venturous as here to analyse it and define even its outlines; but it expresses a substantial idea, it marks a real difference in what men are and can be; and if loose and idle thinkers throw it about as if it was a glittering counter, it is so real, and so important in its meaning, that the most accurate ones cannot dispense with the use of it. The distinction between man in the barbarian state, and man in the state of civil life and civil society, is no imaginary one, though civilised life may be penetrated and disgraced with elements of barbarism, and gleams of civilisation may be discerned

far back in times which are rightly called barbarous. A cloudy sky and a bright sky are different things, though one may be brightening and the other darkening, into its opposite; though there may be uncertainty about their confines; though clouds may be prominent in the clear, and though there be light breaking through the dulness and gloom. Civilisation is a sufficiently definite and a sufficiently interesting thing to speak about, even though we find, as we must if we think at all, how much of the subject eludes our grasp, and how idle it is, on an occasion like the present, to attempt to work upon it, except in the way of rough and imperfect sketching.

I include under the word *Civilisation* all that man does, all that he discovers, all that he becomes, to fit himself most suitably for the life in which he finds himself here. It is obviously possible, for the fact stares us in the face, now as at all times, that this moral being, endowed with conscience and yearning after good, whom *we* believe to be here only in an early and most imperfect stage of his existence, may yet live, and feel, and act, as if all that he was made for was completed here. He may also, with the full assurance of immortality, yet see, in this present state, a scene and stage of real life, in which that life is intended to be developed to the full perfection of which it is capable;—a scene, intended, though temporary only, and only a training place, to call forth his serious and unsparing efforts after improvement;

just as at a school, in playtime as well as in work, we expect as much thought, as much purpose, as much effort, proportionate of course to the time, as we expect in grown-up life. There is, I need not say, a further question—whether this life *can* become all that it is capable of becoming, without reference to something beyond and above it: that, of course, is the question of questions of all ages, and emphatically of our own. But into that I am not now entering. All that I want to insist upon, is that there is such a thing as making this present life as perfect as it can be made for its own sake; improving, inventing, adjusting, correcting, strictly examining into detail, sowing seeds and launching deeply-laid plans of policy, facing the present and realising the future, for the sake of what happens and must happen *in time*, under the known conditions of our experience here. To all such attempts to raise the level of human life, to all such endeavours to expand human capacity and elevate human character, to all that has in view the bettering of our social conditions, in all the manifold forms and diversified relations of the society in which we grow up and live, till our senses come to an end in death; to all that in the sphere, which is bounded to our eyes by the grave, tends to make life more beautiful, more reasonable, more pure, more rich both in achievement and felicity, up to the point when pain, and sorrow, and death claim their dread rights over it, and that even in the presence of pain and

death, imparts to life dignity, self-command, nobleness —to all this I should give the name of civilisation.

I do not, therefore, take civilisation to consist in the mere development, and extension, and perfection, either of the intellectual faculties, or of the arts which minister to the uses and conveniences, or even the embellishment of life. The intellectual faculties, some of them at least, may be strong and keen in what I should still call a low stage of civilisation, as hitherto in India. I cannot call the stage to which man has reached in Egypt, in China, or Japan, a high one, though there he has been singularly ingenious, singularly industrious, and in many ways eminently successful in bringing nature under his control. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy were brilliant centuries; they witnessed a burst of genius in art which was absolutely without its match. It *was* civilisation, I cannot deny it. But I cannot call *that* other than a corrupt and base one, of which the theory was expounded, with infinite ability, by Machiavelli, and the history told by Guicciardini. I do not call it a true civilisation, where men do not attempt to discharge their duties *as men* in society. Not even the presence of Leonardo, Michel Angelo, and Raffaelle can persuade me to rank it high, as a form of civilisation, in which life, amid all its splendours, was so precarious and so misguided, in which all the relations and rights of society were so frightfully confused, and in which the powers of

government were systematically carried on by unlimited perfidy, by the poison bowl and the dagger. I should not consent to call the railway, or the telegraph, or even the newspaper of our own age, a final test of civilisation, till I knew better how the facilities of intercourse were employed, — what was flashed along the wires or written in the columns; nor, again, the wonderful and intricate machinery of our manufactures and trade, till I knew how the wealth produced by it was used. Civilisation, the form, as perfect as man can make it, of his life here, needs these appliances, welcomes them, multiplies them; man needs all the powers that he can get for help, for remedy, for the elevation of his state. But the true subject of civilisation is the *man himself*, and not the circumstances, the instruments, the inventions round him. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." The degree of civilisation in a society, high or low, rising or going back, depends, it seems to me, on the actual facts of civil life, political, social, domestic, not on the machinery of outward things of which men can dispose; on what men try to be one to another; on what they try to make *of themselves*, not of their goods and powers; on the words which they speak, really speak from their hearts, not imitate or feign; on the indications of will and purpose, of habits of life, of self-government or indulgence—in a word, *of character*. The degree of civilisation depends a great

deal more on whether they are manly, honest, just, public-spirited, generous, able to work together in life, than on whether they are rich, or hard-working, or cunning of hand, or subtle of thought, or delicate of taste, or keen searchers into nature and discoverers of its secrets. All these things are sure to belong to civilisation as it advances; and as it advances it needs them, and can turn them to account, more and more. All I say is, that they are not civilisation itself, as I understand it.

Our own civilisation, it is not denied, has been greatly influenced by religion, and by the Christian religion; by the close connection of this present life with a life beyond it, and by what Christianity teaches of our relations to the unseen. But civil life of a high character has undoubtedly existed, at any rate for a time, without such connection. I will venture this evening to put before you the hasty sketch of such a civilisation, and follow it to its fate.

In the ancient world, as we call it, two great forms of civilisation appear, with which we must always have the liveliest sympathy. They have deeply influenced our own: and we must become quite other men from what we are when we forget them. The civilisation of Greece, with Athens for its standard, and in a main degree its source, still lives in our civil and political, as well as in our intellectual life. The great idea of citizenship, with all that flows from it of duty and ennobling service

and cherished ties, found there its clear and complete expression in real fact and spontaneous action, before it was portrayed and analysed by writers of extraordinary force and subtlety, and of matchless eloquence, who are our masters still. But the civilisation of Athens, though not too precocious for its place in the world's history, was too precocious for its own chance of life. On that little stage, and surrounded by the ambitions and fierce energies of a world of conquest,—in its first moment of weakness and mistake, it was oppressed and crushed. It lasted long enough to plant a new conception of human society among men, to disengage and start upon its road a new and inextinguishable power, destined to pursue its way with the most momentous results, through all the times to come. It did not last long enough to work out in any proportionate way a history for itself.

It is to civilisation as exhibited in the Roman State that I invite your attention. There you have the power of growth, of change, and yet of stability and persistent endurance. There you have an ideal of social and civil life, a complex and not always a consistent one, yet in its central elements very strongly defined; keeping its hold on a great people with singular tenacity through the centuries, amid all their varying fortunes; undergoing great transformations in the vicissitudes of good and evil days, yet at the bottom unchanged, and frequently reasserting its un-

impaired vitality at moments when we least expect it. It grew to impress itself on mankind as the power which had a unique right to command their obedience and to order their affairs; it made its possessors, and it made the nations round, feel that Romans were, in a very real sense, the "Lords of the human race." To our eyes, as we look back upon it, it represents, as nothing else does, the civilisation of the *then* world.

Why does it deserve this character? What in it specially has a claim on our interest? The Romans, we know, left their mark on the world; much of what they did is still with us, defying all our centuries of change. We live in the cities which they founded: here, at St. Paul's, one of their great roads runs past our doors. But I do not dwell on Roman civilisation, because they were builders who built as if with the infinite idea of the future before them; because they covered the face of the earth with famous and enduring cities; because their engineers excavated harbours, drained marshes, and brought the waters of the hills along miles of stupendous aqueducts; because they bound together their empire with a network of roads and postal services; because they were the masters of organised and scientific war; because they were great colonial administrators, subduing the earth, to subdue its rudeness, and plant in it the arts of life. Not for all this; but because, in spite of the crimes, which come back to our minds when we name the

Romans, they were yet keenly alive to what men, as men, ought to be,—men, as men, not for what they had, but for what they were—not as rich, or clever, or high in dignity, or even as wielding power, but as citizens of a great commonwealth and city, the Mother and Lady of them all. Not because they possessed in large measure the arts and the expedients by which the social machine is made to move more easily, much less for the pride and sensuality which squandered these arts in ostentation and fabulous luxury; but because, amid all the dark tragedies which fill their history, in spite of the matchless perfidy and the matchless cruelty which contradicted their own ideals, and seem to silence us when we talk of Roman virtue, it is yet true that deep in the minds of the most faithless, the most selfish, the most ruthless, was the knowledge that justice and public spirit were things to which a Roman, by the nobility of his birth, was obliged; because the traditional, accepted popular morality of Rome placed among its first articles, however they were violated in practice, that fortitude, honesty, devotion, energy in service, were essential things in a society of men; because popular opinion, loose as the term may be, had the sentiment of honour, and owned the bond of duty, even to death; because Romans recognised a serious use of life, in *doing*, and doing for the common weal—not merely in learning, or acquiring, or enjoying for themselves alone.

Now, immediately that I have said all this, the picture of Roman history rises up before our thoughts, as it is painted in Gibbon, or Milman, or Merivale. We remember the hard and rapacious times of the Republic, with their resolute and unflinching vindictiveness, their insolent affectations and hypocrisies of moderation and right. We are met by the enormous corruption and monstrous profligacy of the statesmen of the age of transition; and under the Empire we find a system fruitful, normally fruitful, of a succession of beings, the most degraded, the most detestable, the most horrible, of all that ever bore the name of man. Is it worth while to talk in Christian days of a civilisation with such fruits as these?

I venture to submit that it is—that the subject is most interesting and instructive, and that it is our own fault if, in spite of the evil, we are not taught and braced by so much that is strong and so much that is noble. We pass backwards and forwards from admiration to horror and disgust as we read the story in Gibbon, who, in his taste for majesty and pomp, his moral unscrupulousness, and his scepticism, reflected the genius of the Empire of which he recounted the fortunes; but who in his genuine admiration of public spirit and duty, and in his general inclination to be just to all, except only to the Christian name, reflects another and better side of Roman character. For there *was* this better side. Roman civilisation produced not only *great* men, but *good* men of high stamp

and mark; men with great and high views of human life and human responsibility,—with a high standard of what men ought to aim at, with a high belief of what they could do. And it not only produced individuals; it produced a strong and permanent force of sentiment; it produced a character shared very unequally among the people, but powerful enough to determine the course of history, in the way which suited it. I think it may be said with truth that the high ideal of Roman civilisation explains its final and complete collapse. A people with a high standard, acted on by the best, recognised by all, cannot be untrue to the standard with impunity; it not only falls, but falls to a depth proportionate to the height which it once was seeking; it is stricken with the penalty which follows on hollow words and untrue feelings,—on the desertion of light and a high purpose, on the contradiction between law and life. A civilisation like that of China, undisturbed by romantic views of man's nature, and content with a low estimate of his life, may flow on, like one of its great rivers, steady, powerful, useful; unchanged for centuries, and unagitated by that which, more than wars and ambition, is the breaker up of societies,—the power of new ideas, of new hopes and aims. But because Roman civilisation became false to its principles, there was no reversing its doom.

The reason why I put Roman civilisation so high and in so unique a place is, that it grew out of and

cherished, age after age, with singular distinctiveness and tenacity, two great principles. One of these was that the work of the community should be governed by law; the other, that public interest and public claims were paramount to all others.

Where you have in a society a strong and lasting tendency to bring public and private affairs under the control of fixed general rules, to which individual wills are expected and are trained to submit; where these rules are found to be grounded, instinctively perhaps at first, methodically afterwards, on definite principles of right, fitness, and sound reason; where a people's habitual impulse and natural disposition is to believe in laws, and to trust them, and it is accepted as the part of common sense, duty, and honour to obey them,—where these characteristics, of respect for law as an authority, of resort to it as an expedient and remedy, are found to follow the progress of a great national history even from its beginnings, it cannot be denied that there you have an essential feature of high civilisation. They, of whom this may be said, have seen truly, in one most important point, how to order human life. And Law, in that sense in which we know it, and are living under it, in its strength, in its majesty, in its stability, in its practical, businesslike character, may, I suppose, be said to have been born at Rome. And it was born very early; very different, of course, in its rude beginnings, from what it grew to be afterwards, but showing, from the

first, the serious, resolute struggles of the community to escape from the mischiefs of self-will and random living, without understood order and accepted rules. The political conflicts of which Roman history is full, centred, in its best days at least, round laws: they assumed a state of law, they attempted to change it; the result, if result there was, was expressed in a law; violent and extreme measures might be resorted to, and not seldom, in those fierce days, something worse; but it was presupposed by public opinion, whatever violent men might dare, that law was to continue and to be obeyed, till it was changed, and that it would only be changed by lawful authority and by lawful processes. Roman law was no collection of a certain number of vague constitutional articles; it was no cast-iron code of unchanging rules; but it was a real, living, expansive system, developing vigorously as the nation grew, coextensive with the nation's wants in its range and applicability, searching and self-enforcing in its work, a system which the people used and relied upon in their private as much as in their public affairs. And so grew up, slowly and naturally, through many centuries, in the way familiar to us in our law, the imposing and elaborate system of scientific jurisprudence, which the Romans, when they passed away, bequeathed to the coming world; the great collections of Theodosius and Justinian, in which are gathered the experiences of many ages of Roman society, played upon, illuminated.

analysed, arranged, by a succession of judicial intellects of vast power and consummate accomplishment; that as yet unequalled monument of legal learning, comprehensive method, and fruitfulness in practical utility, which, under the name of Civil Law, has been the great example to the world of what law may be, which has governed the jurisprudence of great part of Europe, which has influenced in no slight degree our own jealous and hostile English traditions, and will probably influence them still more. "The education of the world in the principles of a sound jurisprudence," says Dean Merivale, "was the most wonderful work of the Roman conquerors. It was complete; it was universal; and in permanence it has far outlasted, at least in its distinct results, the duration of the Empire itself." A civilisation which, without precedent and unaided, out of its own resources and contact with life, produced such a proof of its idea and estimate of law, must, whatever be its defects, be placed very high.

Again, when, with this strong and clear and permanent sense of law, you also have in a society, among its best men, a strong force of public spirit, and among all a recognition that in this the best reflect the temper and expectations of the whole, its civilisation has reached a high level. It is the civilisation of those who have discerned very distinctly the great object and leading obligation of man's fellowship in a state—of his life as a citizen. And certainly in no

people which the world has ever seen has the sense of public duty been keener and stronger than in Rome, or has lived on with unimpaired vitality through great changes for a longer time. Amid the accumulation of repulsive and dark elements in Roman character, amid the harshness and pride and ferocity, often joined with lower vices, meanness, perfidy, greed, sensuality, there is one which again and again extorts a respect that even courage and high ability cannot—a high, undeniable public spirit. Not always disinterested, any more than in some great men in our own history, but without question, for all that, thoroughly and seriously genuine. It was a tradition of the race. Its early legends dwelt upon the strange and terrible sacrifices which this supreme loyalty to the commonwealth had exacted, and obtained without a murmur, from her sons. They told of a magistrate and a father, the founder of Roman freedom, dooming his two young sons to the axe for having tampered with conspiracy against the State; of great men, resigning high office because they bore a dangerous name, or pulling down their own houses because too great for citizens; of soldiers to whose death fate had bound victory, solemnly devoting themselves to die, or leaping into the gulf which would only close on a living victim; of a great family purchasing peace in civil troubles by leaving the city, and turning their energy into a foreign war, in which they perished; of the captive general who advised

his countrymen to send him back to certain torture and death, rather than grant the terms he was commissioned to propose as the price of his release. Whatever we may think of these stories, they show what was in the mind of those who told and repeated them; and they continued to be the accredited types and models of Roman conduct throughout Roman history. Even in its bad days, even at its close, the temper was there, the sense of public interest, the fire of public duty, the public spirit which accepted without complaint trouble and sacrifice. It produced, at a time when hope seemed gone, a succession of noble and high-souled rulers, whose government gave for a moment the fallacious promise of happiness to the world. It produced a race of now nameless and unremembered men, who, while they probably forgot many other duties, forgot not their duty to the public, of which they were the servants.

"The history of the Cæsars," writes Dean Merivale, "presents to us a constant succession of brave, patient, resolute, and faithful soldiers, men deeply impressed with a sense of duty, superior to vanity, despisers of boasting, content to toil in obscurity, and shed their blood at the frontiers of the Empire, unrepining at the cold mistrust of their masters, not clamorous for the honours so sparingly awarded to them, but satisfied with the daily work of their hands, and full of faith in the national destiny which they were daily accomplishing. If such humble instruments

of society are not to be compared, for the importance of their mission, with the votaries of speculative wisdom, who protested in their lives and in their deaths against the crimes of their generation, there is still something touching in the simple heroism of these chiefs of the legions. . . . Here are virtues not to be named indeed with the zeal of missionaries and the devotion of martyrs, but worthy nevertheless of a high place in the esteem of all who reverence human nature."

For these reasons, and more might be added — among them, the real reverence with which these fierce and successful soldiers regarded the arts, the pursuits, the dress of peace, and readily and willingly returned to them,—we may look back to the civilisation of Rome with an interest which we might not give to its buildings, its wealth, or its organisation of empire. It was a signal and impressive proof of what men might rise to be; of the height, too, to which the spirit of a nation might rise. The world is not rich enough in greatness to afford to forget men who, with so much that was evil and hateful about them, yet made the idea of law a common thing, and impressed on the world so memorably the obligations of public duty and the sanctions of a public trust.

How did such a civilisation come to nought? It is wonderful that it should have arisen; but it is more wonderful that, having arisen, it should have

failed to sustain itself. How did a civilisation so robust, aiming at and creating, not the ornamental and the pleasurable, but the solid and laborious, a character so serious and manly, austerely simple and energetic in men, pure and noble in women—how did it fail and perish? What was the root of bitterness which sprang up amid its strength, and brought it, through the most horrible epochs the world ever saw, of terror and tyranny, and the foulest and most insane licentiousness—epochs which St. Paul's words in his Epistle to the Romans are hardly strong enough to describe—to the most absolute and ignoble ruin? Of course there was evil mixed with it from the first; but evil is mixed with all human things, and evil was mixed to the full with the life and institutions out of which the best days of Christian civilisation have come, whether you put these days in what are called the ages of faith, or the age of the Reformation, or the ages of civil liberty. Pride and selfish greed, hypocrisy, corruption, profligacy, fraud, cruelty, have been as abundant in the centuries after Christ as they were in those before. But the civilisation of Europe is not ruined, in spite of its immense dangers; I see no reason to think that it will be;—why was that of Rome?

To answer this question duly would be to go through the Roman history. I must content myself with one general statement. Roman civilisation was only great as long as men were true to their principles;

but it had no root beyond their personal characters and traditions and customary life; and when these failed, it had nothing else to appeal to—it had no power and spring of recovery. These traditions, these customs of life, this inherited character, did keep up a stout and prolonged struggle against the shocks of changed circumstances, against the restless and unscrupulous cravings of individual selfishness. But they played a losing game. Each shock, each fresh blow, found them weaker after the last; and no favouring respite was allowed them to regain and fortify the strength they had lost. The high instincts of the race wore out: bad men had nothing to do but to deny that these instincts were theirs. The powers of evil and of darkness mounted higher and higher, turning great professions into audacious hypocrisies, great institutions into lifeless and mischievous forms, great principles into absurd self-contradictions. Had there been anything to fall back upon, there were often men to do it; but what was there but the memories and examples of past greatness? Religion had once played a great part in what had given elevation to Roman civil life. It had had much to do with law, with political development, with Roman sense of public duty and Roman reverence for the State. But, of course, a religion of farmers and yeomen, a religion of clannish etiquettes and family pride and ancestral jealousies, could not long stand the competition of the Eastern faiths, or the scepticism

of the cultivated classes. It went; and there was nothing to supply its place but a Philosophy, often very noble and true in its language, able, I doubt not, in evil days to elevate, and comfort, and often purify its better disciples, but unable to overawe, to heal, to charm a diseased society; which never could breathe life and energy into words for the people; which wanted that voice of power which could quicken the dead letter, and command attention, where the destinies of the world were decided. I know nothing more strange and sorrowful in Roman history than to observe the absolute impotence of what must have been popular conscience, on the crimes of statesmen and the bestial infamy of Emperors. There were plenty of men to revile them; there were men to brand them in immortal epigrams; there were men to kill them. But there was no man to make his voice heard and be respected, about righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come.

And so Roman civilisation fell,—fell, before even the eager troops of barbarians rushed in among its wrecks,—fell because it had no salt in it, no wholesome and reviving leaven, no power of recovery. Society could not bear its own greatness, its own immense possessions and powers, its own success and achievements. It fell, and great was the fall thereof. The world had never seen anything like Rome and its civilisation. It seemed the finish and perfection of all things, beyond which human prospects could not go.

The citizens and statesmen who were proud of it, the peoples who reposed under its shadow, the early Christians who hated it as the rival of the Kingdom of God, the men of the Middle Ages who looked on it as the earthly counterpart and bulwark of that kingdom, and insisted on believing that it was still alive in the world,—Augustine who contrasted it with the city of God, Dante who trusted in it as God's predestined minister of truth and righteousness where the Church had failed,—all looked on it as something so consummate and unique in its kind, that nothing could be conceived or hoped for which could take its place. Before the tremendous destructions in which it perished the lights of man's heaven, of all human society, seemed to disappear. Cicero had likened the overthrow and extinction of a city and policy, once created among men, to the ruin and passing away of the solid earth. When the elder civilisation of Rome went to pieces, rotten within and battered by the storms without, it was a portent and calamity which the human imagination had almost refused to believe possible. It was indeed the foundering of a world.

How this lost civilisation was recovered, renewed, and filled with fresh and hopeful life, we may try to see in the next lecture.

## LECTURE II

### CIVILISATION AFTER CHRISTIANITY

The failure of Roman civilisation, its wreck and dissolution in the barbarian storms, was the most astonishing catastrophe the world had yet seen in its history; and those who beheld the empire breaking up, as blow after blow was struck more home, ceased to look forward to any future for society. In this strange collapse of the strongest, in this incredible and inconceivable shaking of the foundations of what was assumed to be eternal, the end seemed come; and as no one could imagine a new and different order, men thought it useless to hope anything more for the world. It is not wonderful,—but they were too despairing. It is not wonderful,—for they had no example within their knowledge of the great lights of human life, which seemed destined to shine for ever, being violently extinguished, and then being rekindled, and conquering once more in heightened splendour the gloom and confusion. They had seen empires perish, but never before the defeat of a matchless structure of

law and administration without example in history, which was to provide security for empire. But they were too despairing. They thought too little of powers and principles new in the world, to which many of them trusted much, both in life and in death, but of which no one then living knew the strength or suspected the working. They guessed not how that while the barbarian deluge was wasting and sweeping away the works of men, God was pouring new life into the world. They guessed not that in that Gospel, which consoled so many of them in the miseries of this sinful world, which to so many seemed but one superstition the more, to which so many traced all their disasters, there lay the seeds of a social and civil revival, compared with which the familiar refinement and extolled civilisation of Rome would one day come to seem little better than an instance of the rudeness of antiquity.

The decay and fall of the old Roman civilisation, and the growth out of its ruins of a new one, infinitely more vigorous and elastic, steady in its long course, patient of defeat and delay, but with century after century witnessing, on one point or another, to its unrelaxed advance,—the giving way of one great system and the replacing it by another,—form a great historical phenomenon, as vast as it is unique and without parallel, and to practical people not less full of warning than it is of hope.

Let us cast a hasty glance upon it,—it can be but

a most hasty and superficial one. What was the change, what was the new force, or element, or aspect of the world, or assemblage of ideas, which proved able to make of society what Roman loftiness of heart, Roman sagacity, Roman patience, Roman strength had failed to make of it? What power was it which took up the discredited and hopeless work, and, infusing new energies and new hopes into men, has made the long history of the Western nations different in kind from any other period of the history of mankind; different in this, that though its march has been often very dark and very weary, often arrested and often retarded, chequered with terrible reverses, and stained by the most flagrant crimes, it has never been, definitely and for good, beaten back; the movement, as we can see when we review it, has been on the whole a uniform one, and has ever been tending onwards; it has never surrendered, and has never had reason to surrender, the hope of improvement, even though improvement might be remote and difficult.

We are told sometimes that it was the power of race, of the new nations which came on the scene; and I do not deny it. But the power of race seems like the special powers of a particular soil, in which certain seeds germinate and thrive with exceptional vigour, but for which you must have the seed, and sow it, before the soil will display its properties. It is very important, but it is not enough to say that Teutons took the place of Latins; indeed, it is not

wholly true. But what planted among Teutons and Latins the seeds and possibilities of a renewed civilisation was the power of a new morality. It is a matter of historical fact, that in the closing days of Rome an entirely new set of moral ideas and moral purposes, of deep significance, fruitful in consequences, and of a strength and intensity unknown before, were making their way in society, and establishing themselves in it. It is to the awakening of this new morality, which has never perished out of the hearts of men from that day to this, that the efforts and the successes of modern civilisation are mainly due; it is on the permanence of these moral convictions that it rests. What the origin and root of this morality really are, you will not suppose that in this place I affect to make a question; but the matter I am now dwelling on is the morality itself, not on its connection with the Christian creed. And it is as clear and certain a fact of history that the coming in of Christianity was accompanied by new moral elements in society, inextinguishable, widely operative, never destroyed, though apparently at times crushed and paralysed, as it is certain that Christian nations have made on the whole more progress in the wise ordering of human life than was made in the most advanced civilisation of the times before Christianity.

Roman belief in right and law had ended in scepticism, whether there was such a thing as good-

ness and virtue: Roman public spirit had given place, under the disheartening impression of continual mistakes and disappointments, to a selfish indifference to public scandals and public mischiefs. The great principles of human action were hopelessly confused; enthusiasm for them was dead. This made vain the efforts of rulers like Trajan and the Antonines, of scientific legislators like Justinian, of heroes like Belisarius; they could not save a society in which, with so much outward show, the moral tone was so fatally decayed and enfeebled. But over this dreary waste of helplessness and despondency, over these mud-banks and shallows, the tide was coming in and mounting. Slowly, variably, in imperceptible pulsations, or in strange, wild rushes, the great wave was flowing. There had come into the world an enthusiasm, popular, widespread, serious, of a new kind; not for conquest, or knowledge, or riches, but for real, solid goodness. It seems to me that the exultation apparent in early Christian literature, beginning with the Apostolic Epistles, at the prospect now at length disclosed within the bounds of a sober hope, of a great moral revolution in human life,—that the rapturous confidence which pervades these Christian ages, that at last the routine of vice and sin has met its match, that a new and astonishing possibility has come within view, that men, not here and there, but on a large scale, might attain to that hitherto hopeless thing to the multitudes, goodness,—

is one of the most singular and solemn things in history. The enthusiasm of the Crusades, the enthusiasm of Puritanism, the enthusiasm of the Jacobins —of course I am speaking only of strength and depth of feeling—were not its equal. We can, I suppose, have but a dim idea of the strange and ravishing novelty with which the appearance of Divine and unearthly Goodness, in real human form, burst upon eyes accustomed, as to an order of nature, to the unbroken monotony of deepening debasement, wearied out with the unchanging spectacle of irremediable sin. The visitation and presence of that High Goodness, making Himself like men, calling men to be like Him, had altered the possibilities of human nature; it was mirrored more or less perfectly in a thousand lives; it had broken the spell and custom of evil which seemed to bind human society; it had brought goodness real, inward, energetic goodness of the soul within the reach of those who seemed most beyond it—the crowds, the dregs, the lost. That well-known world, the scene of man's triumphs and of his untold sorrows, but not of his goodness, was really a place where righteousness and love and purity should have a visible seat and home, and might wield the power which sin had wielded over the purposes and wills of men. To men on whom this great surprise had come, who were in the vortex of this great change, all things looked new. Apart from the infinite seriousness given to human life by the cross of Christ,

from the infinite value and dignity given to it by the revelation of resurrection and immortality, an awful rejoicing transport filled their souls, as they saw that there was the chance,—more than the chance,—the plain forerunning signs, of human nature becoming here, what none had ever dared to think it would become, morally better. When they speak of this new thing in the earth, the proved reality of conversion from sin to righteousness, of the fruits of repentance, of the supplanting of vice by yet mightier influences of purity, of the opening and boundless prospects of moral improvement and elevation,—their hearts swell, their tone is exalted, their accent becomes passionate and strong. It was surely the noblest enthusiasm—if it was but rooted in lasting and trustworthy influences —which the world had ever seen. It was no wonder that this supreme interest eclipsed all other interests. It is no wonder that for this glorious faith men gladly died.

This second springtide of the world, this fresh start of mankind in the career of their eventful destiny, was the beginning of many things; but what I observe on now is that it was the beginning of new chances, new impulses, and new guarantees for civilised life, in the truest and worthiest sense of the words. It was this, by bringing into society a morality which was serious and powerful, and a morality which would wear and last; one which could stand the shocks of human passion, the

desolating spectacle of successful wickedness, the insidious waste of unconscious degeneracy, — one which could go back to its sacred springs and repair its fire and its strength. Such a morality, as Roman greatness was passing away, took possession of the ground. Its beginnings were scarcely felt, scarcely known of, in the vast movement of affairs in the greatest of empires. By and by its presence, strangely austere, strangely gentle, strangely tender, strangely inflexible, began to be noticed. But its work was long only a work of indirect preparation. Those whom it charmed, those whom it opposed, those whom it tamed, knew not what was being done for the generations which were to follow them. They knew not, while they heard of the household of God, and the universal brotherhood of man, that the most ancient and most familiar institution of their society, one without which they could not conceive its going on,—slavery,—was receiving the fatal wound of which, though late, too late, it was at last to die. They knew not, when they were touched by the new teaching about forgiveness and mercy, that a new value was being insensibly set on human life, new care and sympathy planted in society for human suffering, a new horror awakened at human bloodshed. They knew not, while they looked on men dying, not for glory or even country, but for convictions and an invisible truth, that a new idea was springing up of the sacredness of conscience, a new reverence beginning for

veracity and faithfulness. They knew not that a new measure was being established of the comparative value of riches and all earthly things, while they saw, sometimes with amazement, sometimes with inconsiderate imitativeness, the numbers who gave up the world, and all that was best as well as worst in it, for love of the eternal heritage—in order to keep themselves pure. They knew not of the great foundations laid for public duty and public spirit, in the obligations of Christian membership, in the responsibilities of the Christian clergy, in the never-forgotten example of One whose life had been a perpetual service, and who had laid it down as the most obvious of claims for those to whom He had bound Himself. They little thought of what was in store for civil and secular society, as they beheld a number of humble men, many of them foreigners, plying their novel trade of preachers and missionaries, announcing an eternal kingdom of righteousness, welcoming the slave and the outcast as a brother,—a brother of the Highest,—offering hope and change to the degraded sinner, stammering of Christ and redemption to the wild barbarian, worshipping in the catacombs, and meekly burying their dead, perhaps their wronged and murdered dead, in the sure hope of everlasting peace. Slowly, obscurely, imperfectly, most imperfectly, these seeds of blessing for society began to ripen, to take shape, to gain power. The time was still dark and wintry and tempestuous, and the night was long in going. It is hard even now

to discern there the promise of what our eyes have seen. I suppose it was impossible then. It rather seemed as if the world was driving rapidly to its end, not that it was on the eve of its most amazing and hopeful transformation. But in that unhappy and desponding and unhonoured time, borne in the bosom of that institution and society which the world knew and knows as the Christian Church, there were present the necessary and manifold conditions of the most forward civilisation; of its noblest features, of its substantial good, of its justice, its order, its humanity, its hopefulness, its zeal for improvement:—

> There is a day in spring
> When under all the earth the secret germs
> Begin to stir and glow before they bud.
> The wealth and festal pomps of midsummer
> Lie in the heart of that inglorious hour
> Which no man names with blessing, though its work
> Is blessed by all the world. Such days there are
> In the slow story of the growth of souls.[1]

And such a day there was in the "slow story" of the improvement and progress of civilised Christendom.

The point I wish to insist on is, that with Christianity, as long as there is Christianity, there comes a moral spring and vitality and force, a part and consequence of its influence, which did not and could not exist before it. You cannot conceive of Christianity except as a moral religion, requiring, inspiring moral-

[1] Story of Queen Isabel. By Miss Smedley.

ity; and it was just this spring, this force of morality, which was wanting, and which could not be, in Roman civilisation. Morality there was, often in a high degree; but it came and went with men or with generations, and there was nothing to keep it alive, nothing to rekindle it when extinct, nothing to suggest and nourish its steady improvement. At any rate there was not enough, if, when we remember the influence of great examples and great writers, it is too sweeping to say there was nothing. But with Christianity the condition was changed. I am sure I am not unmindful of what shortcomings, what shames and sins, what dark infamies, blot the history of Christian society. I do not forget that Christian morality has been a thing of degrees and impulses, rising and falling; that it has been at times impracticably extreme, and at times scandalously lax; that there have been periods when it seemed lost; that in some of its best days it has been unaccountably blind and perversely stupid and powerless, conniving at gross and undeniable inconsistencies, condoning flagrant wrong. This is true. Yet look through all the centuries since it appeared, and see if ever, in the worst and darkest of them, it was not *there*, as it never was in Rome, for hope, if not for present help and remedy. There was an undying voice, even if it came from the lips of hypocrites, which witnessed perpetually of mercy, justice, and peace. There was a seriousness given to human life, by a death everywhere died in the prospect of the

judgment. I am putting things at the worst. Christian morality lived even in the tenth century; even in the times of the Borgias and Medici. The wicked passed—the wicked age, the wicked men; passed, with the evil they had done, with the good which they had frustrated, with the righteous whom they had silenced or slain. And when they were gone, "when the tyranny was overpast," the unforgotten law of right, the inextinguishable power of conscience, were found to have survived unweakened through the hour of darkness, ready to reassert and to extend their empire. Great as have been the disasters and failures of Christian society, I think we have not yet seen the kind of hopeless collapse in which Roman civilisation ended. Feeble and poor as the spring of morality might be in this or that people, there has hitherto been something to appeal to, and to hope from, which was not to be found in the days of the Antonines, the most peaceful and felicitous of Roman times.

In this great restoration of civilisation, which is due mainly to the impulse and the power of Christian morality, a great place must be given to the *direct* influence of Christian aspects of life and ideas of duty. Christian ideas of purity acted directly on all that was connected with family and domestic life. They forbade, with intense and terrible severity, before which even passion quailed, the frightful liberty in the relations of the sexes which in Greece, and at last in Rome, had been thought so natural. Here was

one great point fixed: the purification of the home, the sanctity thrown round the wife and the mother, the rescuing of the unmarried from the assumed license of nature, the protection given to the honour of the female slave and then of the female servant, were social victories well worth the unrelenting and often extravagant asceticism which was, perhaps, their inevitable price at first. They were the immediate effects of a belief in the Sermon on the Mount; and where that belief was held, they would more or less consistently follow. So with the fiercer tempers and habits of men; against cruelty, against high-handed oppression and abuse of strength, there was a constant, unyielding protest in the Christian law of justice and charity, continually unheeded, never unfelt; even war and vengeance were uneasy under the unceasing though unavailing rebuke of the Gospel law, and made concessions to it, though too strong, too fatally necessary, to submit to it. Further, under the influence of Christian morality, later civilisation showed a power of appropriating and assimilating all that was noble and salutary in its older forms. It appropriated the Roman idea of law, and gave it a larger and more equitable scope, and a more definite consecration to the ends of justice and the common good. It invested the ancient idea of citizenship and patriotism with simpler and more generous feelings, and with yet holier sanctions. It accepted from the ancient thinkers their philosophic temper and open spirit of

inquiry, and listened reverentially to their lessons of wisdom. It reinforced the Roman idea, a confused and inconsistent though a growing one, of the unity of the human race; and though the victory over custom and appearances is hardly yet won, the tendency to recognise that unity can never fail, while the belief prevails that Christ died for the world. And once more, it is not easy to say what Christian belief, Christian life, Christian literature have done to make the greatest thoughts of the ancient world "come home to men's business and bosoms." No one can read the wonderful sayings of Seneca, Epictetus, or Marcus Aurelius, without being impressed, abashed perhaps, by their grandeur. No one can read them without wondering the next moment why they fell so dead — how little response they seemed to have awakened round them. What was *then* but the word of the solitary thinker has now become the possession, if they will, of the multitude. The letter of great maxims has been filled with a vivifying spirit. Their truths have been quickened into new meaning by the new morality in which they have found a place, by the more general and keener conscience which has owned them.

The direct effects of Christian morality on modern civilisation would be allowed by most people to be manifest and great. I wish to call attention to one or two points of its indirect influence. Civilisation, the ordering with the utmost attainable success, of

civil and secular life, is one thing; and Christian religion is another. They are two currents, meeting from time to time, inosculating, sometimes confused, at other times divergent and possibly flowing different ways; but, anyhow, they are two currents. Take such a picture of real daily human interests and human activity as is presented to us in so wonderful, so overwhelming, though so familiar a shape, in the columns, and quite as much in the advertisements, of a great newspaper; or again, when we thread the streets and crowds of a great city, and try to imagine the infinite aims and divisions of its business. There is the domain of civilisation, its works, its triumphs, its failures and blots; and its main scope is *this* life, whatever be the affinities and relations by which it has to do with what concerns man's other life. But the point that seems to me worth notice is this: the way in which the Christian current of thought, of aim, of conscience, of life, has affected the other current, even where separated and remote from it. We are told that the presence of electrical force in one body induces a corresponding force in another not in contact with the first, but adjacent to it; that one set of forces is raised to greater than their normal power and intensity by the neighbourhood of another; that currents passing in a given direction communicate, as long as they continue, new properties to a body round which they circulate: the neutral iron becomes a magnet, attracting, vibrating, able to hold up weights, as

long as it is encircled by a galvanic circuit, which does not touch or traverse it. So the presence of Christian forces acted, by a remote and indirect sympathy, even where they did not mingle and penetrate in their proper shape. Much of civilisation has always been outside of Christianity, and its leaders and agents have often not thought of Christianity in their work. But they worked in its neighbourhood, among those who owned it, among those who saw it, among those who lived by it: and the conscientiousness, the zeal, the single-mindedness, the spirit of improvement, the readiness for labour and trouble, the considerateness and sympathy, the manly modesty, which are wherever Christianity has "had its perfect work," have developed and sustained kindred tempers, where aims and pursuits, and the belief in which a man habitually lives, have been in a region far away from religion. Take the administration of justice. It *has* been, it *must* be, in society, whether there is religion or not. It was found in Roman times, up to a certain point, in a very remarkable degree of perfection. It has been, it may still be, in Christian times, carried on, and admirably carried on, by men who do not care for Christianity. I am very far indeed from saying that in these times it has always been worthy either of Christianity or civilisation. But I suppose we may safely say that it has been distinctly improving through the Christian centuries. We may safely say that in its best and most improved stages

it is an admirable exhibition of some of the noblest qualities of human character; honesty, strength without show, incorruptness, scrupulous care, unwearied patience, desire for right and for truth, and laborious quest of them, public feeling, humanity, compassion even when it is a duty to be stern. There were great and upright Roman magistrates; but whatever Roman jurisprudence attained to, there was no such administration of justice, where men thought and felt right, and did right, as a matter of course. And is it too much to say that the growing and gathering power of ideas of duty, right, and mercy, derived from Christianity, have wrought and have conquered, even when their source was not formally acknowledged, even when it was kept at a distance; and that they have given a security for one of the first essentials of civilisation, which is distinctly due to their perhaps circuitous and remote influence?

But, after all, it may not unreasonably occur to you that I am claiming too much for the civilisation of Christian times; that my account of it is one-sided and unfairly favourable. Putting aside the earlier centuries of confusion and struggle, when it might be urged that real tendencies had not yet time to work themselves clear, what is there to choose, it may be said, between the worst Roman days and many periods of later history, long after Christianity had made good its footing in society? What do we say to the dislocation, almost the dis-

solution, of society in great wars,—the English Invasion, the Wars of the League, in France, our own civil wars, the municipal feuds in Italy, the Thirty Years' War in Germany? What to the civilisation of the ages like those of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., full of brilliancy, full of most loathsome unrighteousness and corruption, gilded by the profoundest outward honour for religion? What shall we say of Inquisitions, and Penal Laws, and here, in our own England, of a criminal code which, up to the end of the last century, hanged mere children for a trifling theft? What shall we say of the huge commercial dishonesties of our own age, of our pauperism, of our terrible inequalities and contrasts of wealth and life? What shall we say of a great nation almost going to pieces before our eyes, and even now moving anxiously to a future which no one pretends to foresee? What advantage have we, how is civilisation the better for the influence on it of Christianity, if this, and much more like this, is what is shown by the history and the facts of the modern world?

It will at once suggest itself to you that when we speak of civilisation we speak of a thing of infinite degrees and variety. Every man in this congregation stands, probably, at a different point from all his neighbours in the success with which, if I may use the words, he *has made himself a man*; has developed the capacities and gifts which are in him, has fulfilled the purpose and done the work for which he was

made to live, has reached "the measure of the fulness of that stature" which he might and was intended to attain. And so with societies, and different times in the history of a society. There have been in Christian times poor and feeble forms of civilisation, there have been degenerate ones, as there have been strong ones; and in the same society there have been monstrous and flagrant inconsistencies, things left undone, unrighted, unnoticed, the neglect of which seems unaccountable, things quietly taken for granted which it is amazing that a Christian conscience could tolerate. Think how long and how patiently good men accepted negro slavery, who would have set the world in flame rather than endure slavery at home. Human nature is wayward and strange in the proportion which it keeps in its perceptions of duty, in its efforts and achievements. But for all this it seems to me idle to deny that men in Christian times have reached a higher level, and have kept it, in social and civil life, than they ever reached before, and that this is distinctly to be traced to the presence and action in society of Christian morality.

But this is not what I wanted specially to say. What I want you to notice, as new, since Christianity began to act on society, as unprecedented, as characteristic, is the power of recovery which appears in society in the Christian centuries. What is the whole history of modern Europe but the history of such recoveries? And what is there like it to be

found in the ancient world? Dark days have been, indeed, in Christendom. Society seemed to be breaking up, as it did at last at Rome. But wait awhile, and you saw that which you looked for in vain at Rome. The tide began to turn; the energy, the indignation, the resolute, unflinching purpose of reformation began to show itself; and whether wise or not, whether in its special and definite work a failure or even a mischief, it was at least enough to rouse society, to set it on a new course, to disturb that lethargy of custom which is so fatal, to make men believe that it was not a law of nature or of fate, that "as things had been, things must be." That terrible disease of public and stagnant despair which killed Roman society has not had the mastery yet in Christian; in evil days, sooner or later, there have been men to believe that they could improve things, even if, in fact, they could not. And for that power of hope, often, it may be, chimerical and hazardous, but hope which has done so much for the improvement of social life, the world is indebted to Christianity. It was part of the very essence of Christianity not to let evil alone. It was bound, it was its instinct, to attack it. Christian men have often, no doubt, mistaken the evil which they attacked; but their acquiescence in supposed evil, and their hopelessness of a victory for good, would have been worse for the world than their mistakes. The great reforms in Christian days have been very mixed

ones; but they *have been reforms*, an uninterrupted series of attempts at better things; for society, for civilisation, successive and real, though partial recoveries. The monastic life, which was, besides its other aspects, the great civilising agent in the rural populations; the varied and turbulent municipal life in the cities; the institutions in the Middle Ages, on a broad and grand scale, for teaching, for study, for preaching, for the reformation of manners; the determined and sanguine ventures of heroic enthusiasts, like St. Bernard, Savonarola, or Luther, or of gentler, but not less resolute reformers, like Erasmus and our own Dean Colet; the varied schemes for human improvement, so varied, so opposed, so incompatible, yet in purpose *one*, of Jesuits, of Puritans, of the great Frenchmen of Port Royal,—all witness to the undying, unwearied temper which had been kindled in society, and which ensured it from the mere ruin of helplessness and despair. They were all mistakes, you will say perhaps, or full of mistakes. Yes, but we all do our work through mistakes, and the boldest and most successful of us perhaps make the most. They failed in the ambitious completeness, the real one-sidedness and narrowness, of their aim; but they left their mark, if only in this—that they exhibited men in the struggle with evil and the effort after improvement, refusing to give up, refusing to be beaten. But indeed they were more than this. There are

none, I suppose, of these great stirrings of society, however little we may sympathise with them, which have not contributed something for which those who come after are the better. The wilder or the feebler ones were an earnest of something more reasonable and serious. They mark and secure, for some important principle or idea, a step which cannot easily be put back. They show, as the whole history of Christendom, with all its dismal tracts of darkness and blood, seems to me to show, that society in Christian times has somehow or other possessed a security, a charm against utter ruin, which society before them had not; that it has been able to go through the most desperate crises, and at length throw off the evil, and continue on its path not perhaps unharmed, yet with a new chance of life; that, following its course from first to last, we find in it a tough, indestructible force of resistance to decay, a continual, unworn-out spring of revival, renovation, restoration, recovery, and augmented strength, which, wherever it comes from, is most marked and surprising, and which forms an essential difference between Christian society and the conditions of society before and beyond Christian influences.

I must bring to an end what I have to say. I know quite well that the subject is not finished. But there are various reasons why at present I am unable to finish it. Yet I hope I shall not have quite wasted your time if I have said anything to

make you wish to inquire and to think about this supreme question; the relations of our modern civilisation, not only so refined, and so full of arts and appliances and great organisations, but so serious, to those eternal truths which lead up our thoughts to the ultimate destinies of man, to the Throne of the Most High and the Most Holy. Society is debating whether it shall remain Christian or not. I hope that all who hear me, the majority of whom twenty years hence, when I and my contemporaries shall have passed from the scene, will belong to the grown-up generation which then will have the fate of English society in their hands, will learn to reflect on that question with the seriousness which it deserves.

ON SOME

# INFLUENCES OF CHRISTIANITY

UPON

# NATIONAL CHARACTER

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THREE LECTURES

DELIVERED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

*February 4th, 11th, and 18th*, 1873

# LECTURE I

## INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON NATIONAL CHARACTER

I PROPOSE on this occasion to invite you to consider some of the ways in which national character has been affected by Christianity, and to trace these effects in certain leading types of national character which appear to have been specially influenced by Christianity :—The character of the European races belonging to the *Eastern Church*, particularly the Greek; that of the Southern, or, as they are called, the *Latin* races, particularly the Italians and French; and, lastly, that of the *Teutonic* races. These three divisions will supply the subjects of the three lectures which it is my business to deliver.

It is obvious that within the limits to which I am confined, such a subject can be treated only in the most general outline. Within these great divisions national character varies greatly. And national character, real as is the meaning conveyed by the term, is yet, when we come to analyse and describe it, so delicate and subtle a thing, so fugitive, and so

complex in the traits and shades which produce the picture, that its portraiture tasks the skill of the most practised artist, and overtasks that of most. But yet, that there is such a thing is as certain as that there is a general type of physiognomy or expression characteristic of different races. One by one, no doubt, many faces might belong equally to Englishmen or Frenchmen, Italians, Greeks, or Russians. But, in spite of individual uncertainties, the type, on the whole, asserts itself with curious clearness. If you cannot be sure of it in single faces, it strikes you in a crowd. In one of the years of our Exhibitions, an illustrated paper published an engraving—it was the border, I think, of a large representation of the Exhibition building—in which were ranged in long procession representatives of the chief nationalities supposed to be collected at the Exhibition, or contributing to it. Dress and other things had, of course, much to do with marking them out one from another; but beyond dress and adjuncts like dress, there was the unmistakable type of face, caught with singular keenness of discrimination, and exhibited without exaggeration or a semblance of caricature. The types were average ones, such as every one recognised and associated with this or that familiar nationality; and the differences were as real between the more nearly related types as between the most strongly opposed ones,—as real between the various members of the European family as between European and Chinese,

though the difficulty of detecting and expressing the differences is greater in proportion as these differences pass from broad and obvious ones to such as are fine and complicated. So it is with national character. The attempt to define it, to criticise it, to trace its sources, to distinguish between what it is and what it seems, to compare and balance its good and its bad—this attempt may be awkward and bungling, may be feeble, one-sided, unjust. It may really miss all the essential and important features, and dwell with disproportionate emphasis on such as are partial and trivial, or are not peculiarities at all. Bad portrait-painting is not uncommon. Yet each face has its character and expression unlike every other, if only the painter can seize it. And so, in those great societies of men which we call nations, there is a distinct aspect belonging to them as wholes, which the eye catches and retains, even if it cannot detect its secret, and the hand is unequal to reproduce it. Its reality is betrayed, and the consciousness of its presence revealed, by the antipathies of nations, and their current judgments one of another.

The character of a nation, supposing there to be such a thing, must be, like the character of an individual, the compound result of innumerable causes. Roughly, it may be said to be the compound product of the natural qualities and original tendencies of a nation, and of a nation's history. The natural qualities and tendencies have helped largely to make the

history out of circumstances and events, partly, at least, independent of these inherent forces; and the history has then reacted on the natural qualities. What a nation has come to be has depended on the outfit of moral, intellectual, and physical gifts and conditions with which it started on its career in the world; and then, on the occurrences and trials which met it in its course, and the ways in which it dealt with them; on the influences which it welcomed or resisted; on critical decisions; on the presence and power of great men good and bad; on actions which closed the old, or opened the new; on the feelings, assumptions, and habits which it had allowed to grow up in it. All this needs no illustration. The Greeks never could have been what they have been in their influence on human history if they had not started with the rich endowments with which nature had furnished them; but neither could they have been what they were, wonderfully endowed as we know them to have been, if Athens had not resisted and conquered at Marathon and Salamis; if those victories had been mere patriotic assertions of independence and liberty, like the great Swiss victories of Morgarten and Sempach, and had not stimulated so astonishingly Athenian capacities for statesmanship, for literature, for art; if they had not been followed by the historians, the moralists, the poets of Athens; if there had been no Pericles, no Phidias, no Socrates; if there had been no Alexander to make Greek mind and

Greek letters share his conquest of the Eastern world. So with the nations of our living world. The sturdiest Englishman must feel, not only that his country would have been different, but he might himself have been other than he is, if some great events in our history had gone differently; if some men had not lived, and if others had not died when they did; if England had been made an appendage to the Spanish Netherlands in 1588, or a dependency of the great French King in 1688, or of the great French Emperor in 1805; if Elizabeth had died and Mary lived. It is idle to pursue this in instances. It is obvious that a nation's character is what it is, partly from what it brought with it on the stage of its history, partly from what it has done and suffered, partly from what it has encountered in its progress; giving to an external or foreign element a home and the right of citizenship within it, or else shutting its doors to the stranger, and treating it as an intruder and an enemy. And among these influences, which have determined both the character and history of nations, one of the most important, at least during the centuries of which the years are reckoned from the birth of our Lord, has been religion.

I state the fact here generally without reference to what that religion is, or of what kind its influence may have been. Everybody knows the part which Mahometanism has played, and is still playing, in shaping the ideas, the manners, and the history of

nations in Asia and Africa. In its direct and unambiguous power over the races in which it has taken root, and in the broad and simple way in which it has mastered their life and habits, and dominated in the direction of their public policy, I suppose that there is no religion which can compare with it. Its demands, devotional and moral, are easily satisfied but strictly enforced; and to a genuine Mahometan a religious war is the most natural field for national activity. As has been justly said[1] — "It has consecrated despotism; it has consecrated polygamy; it has consecrated slavery;" it has done this directly, in virtue of its being a religion, a religious reform. This is an obvious instance in which national character and national history would not have been what they have been without the presence and persistent influence of the element of religion. The problem is infinitely more complicated in the case of those higher races, for such they are, which escaped or resisted the Mahometan conquest; but there, too, the power of this great factor is equally undeniable, and is much richer and more varied in results, though these results are not so much on the surface, and are often more difficult to assign amid the pressure of other elements, to their perhaps distant causes.

To come, then, to my subject this evening. What have been the effects of Christianity on what we call national character in Eastern Christendom? I must

[1] Freeman, *Saracens*, p. 246.

remind you, once more, how very roughly and imperfectly such a question can be answered here. The field of investigation is immense, and in part very obscure; and the utmost that I can do is, if possible, to make out some salient points, which may suggest, to those who care to pursue it, the beginnings of further inquiry. I propose to confine myself to one race of the great family. I shall keep in view mainly the Greek race, as a typical specimen of Eastern Christendom. I am quite aware how much I narrow the interest of the subject by leaving out of direct consideration a people with such a strongly marked character, with such a place in the world now, and such a probable future, as the great Russian nation, —a nation which may be said to owe its national enthusiasm, its national convictions, its intense coherence, and the terrible strength it possesses, to its being penetrated with religion. But, having to choose a field of survey with reference to the time at our disposal, I prefer to keep to the Greek race, because the impression made on them was a primary and original one, and was communicated by them to other nations, like Russia, because they have had the longest history, and because their history has been more full than that of others of the vicissitudes of circumstance and fortune.

It requires an effort in us of the West to call up much interest in the Eastern Christian races and their fortunes. They are very different from us in great

and capital points of character, and our historians have given them a bad name. Many persons would regard them as decisive instances of the failure of Christianity to raise men, even of its liability under certain conditions to be turned into an instrument to corrupt and degrade them. The Greeks of the Lower Empire are taken as the typical example of these races, and the Greeks of the Lower Empire have become a byword for everything that is false and base. The Byzantine was profoundly theological, we are told, and profoundly vile. And I suppose the popular opinion of our own day views with small favour his modern representatives, and is ready to contrast them to their disadvantage with the Mahometan population about them. There is so much truth in this view that it is apt, as in many other cases, to make people careless of the injustice they commit by taking it for the whole truth. Two things, as it seems to me,—besides that general ignorance which is the mother of so much unfairness and scorn in all subjects, — have especially contributed to establish among us a fixed depreciation of all that derives its descent from the great centres of Eastern Christianity. One is the long division between Western and Eastern Christendom, which beginning in a rift, the consequences of which no one foresaw, and which all were therefore too careless or too selfish to close when it might have been closed, has widened in the course of ages into a yawning gulf, which nothing that human

judgment can suggest will ever fill up, and which, besides its direct quarrels and misfortunes, has brought with it a train of ever-deepening prejudices and antipathies, of which those who feel them often know not the real source. Another thing which has contributed to our popular disparagement of these races is the enormous influence of Gibbon's great History. It is not too much to say that the common opinion of educated Englishmen about the history and the character of everything derived from Byzantium or connected with it is based on this History, and, in fact, as a definite opinion dates from its appearance. He has brought out with incomparable force all that was vicious, all that was weak, in Eastern Christendom. He has read us the evil lesson of caring in their history to see nothing else; of feeling too much pleasure in the picture of a religion discredited, of a great ideal utterly and meanly baffled, to desire to disturb it by the inconvenient severity of accuracy and justice. But the authority of Gibbon is not final. There is, after all, another side to the story. In telling it, his immense and usually exact knowledge gave him every advantage in supporting what I must call the prejudiced conclusions of a singularly cold heart; while his wit, his shrewdness, and his pitiless sarcasm gave an edge to his learning, and a force which learning has not always had in shaping the opinions of the unlearned. The spell of Gibbon's genius is not easy to break. But later writers, with

equal knowledge and with a more judicial and more generous temper, have formed a very different estimate of the Greek Empire and the Greek race, and have corrected, if they have not reversed, his sentence. Those who wish to be just to a form of society which it was natural in him to disparage will pass on from his brilliant pages to the more equitable and conscientious, but by no means indulgent, judgments of Mr. Finlay, Mr. Freeman, and Dean Stanley.

One fact alone is sufficient to engage our deep interest in this race. It was Greeks and people imbued with Greek ideas who first welcomed Christianity. It was in their language that it first spoke to the world, and its first home was in Greek households and in Greek cities. It was in a Greek atmosphere that the Divine Stranger from the East, in many respects so widely different from all that Greeks were accustomed to, first grew up to strength and shape; first showed its power of assimilating and reconciling; first showed what it was to be in human society. Its earliest nurslings were Greeks; Greeks first took in the meaning and measure of its amazing and eventful announcements; Greek sympathies first awoke and vibrated to its appeals; Greek obedience, Greek courage, Greek suffering first illustrated its new lessons. Had it not first gained over Greek mind and Greek belief, it is hard to see how it would have made its further way. And to that first welcome the Greek race has been profoundly and

unalterably faithful. They have passed through centuries for the most part of adverse fortune. They have been in some respects the most ill-treated race in the world. To us in the West, at least, their Christian life seems to have stopped in its growth at an early period; and, compared with the energy and fruitfulness of the religious principle in those to whom they passed it on, their Christianity disappoints, perhaps repels us. But to their first faith, as it grew up, substantially the same, in Greek society, in the days of Justin and Origen, as it was formulated in the great Councils, as it was embodied in the Liturgies, as it was concentrated and rehearsed in perpetual worship, as it was preached by Gregory and Chrysostom, as it was expounded by Basil, Cyril of Jerusalem, and John of Damascus, as it prompted the lives of saints and consecrated the triumphs of martyrs, they still cling, as if it was the wonder and discovery of yesterday. They have never wearied of it. They have scarcely thought of changing its forms.

The Roman Conquest of the world found the Greek race, and the Eastern nations which it had influenced, in a low and declining state — morally, socially, politically. The Roman Empire, when it fell, left them in the same discouraging condition, and suffering besides from the degradation and mischief wrought on all its subjects by its chronic and relentless fiscal oppression. The Greek of Roman times was the ad-

miration and envy of his masters for his cleverness and the glories which he had inherited; and their scorn for his utter moral incapacity to make any noble and solid use of his gifts. The typical Greek of Juvenal's satire answered to the typical Frenchman of Dr. Johnson's imitation of it, the ideal Frenchman of our great-grandfathers in the eighteenth century. He was a creature of inexhaustible ingenuity, but without self-respect, without self-command or modesty, capable of everything as an impostor and a quack, capable of nothing as a man and a citizen. There was no trusting his character any more than his word: "unstable as water," fickle as the veering wind, the slave of the last new thing, whether story, or theory, or temptation, —to the end of his days he was no better or of more value than a child in the serious things which it becomes men to do. Full of quickness and sensibility, open to every impulse, and a judge of every argument, he was without aim or steadiness in life, ridiculous in his levity and conceit,—even in his vice and corruption more approaching to the naughtiness of a reckless schoolboy than to the grave and deliberate wickedness which marked the Roman sensualists. These were the men in whose childish conceit, childish frivolity, childish self-assertion, St. Paul saw such dangers to the growth of Christian manliness and to the unity of the Christian body—the idly curious and gossiping men of Athens; the vain and shamelessly ostentatious Corinthians, men in intellect, but in moral seriousness

babes; the Ephesians, "like children carried away with every blast of vain teaching," the victims of every impostor, and sport of every deceit; the Cretans, proverbially, "ever liars, evil beasts, slow bellies;" the passionate, volatile, Greek-speaking Celts of Asia, the "foolish" Galatians; the Greek-speaking Christians of Rome, to whom St. Paul could address the argument of the Epistle to the Romans, and whom yet he judged it necessary to warn so sternly against thinking more highly of themselves than they ought to think, and against setting individual self-pleasing against the claims and interests of the community. The Greek of the Roman times is portrayed in the special warnings of the Apostolic Epistles. After Apostolic times he is portrayed in the same way by the heathen satirist Lucian, and by the Christian preacher Chrysostom; and such, with all his bad tendencies, aggravated by almost uninterrupted misrule and oppression, the Empire, when it broke up, left him. The prospects of such a people, amid the coming storms, were dark. Everything, their gifts and versatility, as well as their faults, threatened national decay and disintegration. How should they stand the collision with the simpler and manlier barbarians from the northern wastes, from the Arabian wilderness, from the Tartar steppes? How should they resist the consuming and absorbing enthusiasm of Mahometanism? How should they endure, century after century, the same crushing ill-treatment, the same misgovernment and misfortune,

without at last breaking up and dissolving into something other than they were, and losing the thread of their national continuity ?

Look at the same group of races, and especially at the leading and typical one of the group, the Greeks in Europe and Asia, after the impending evils had fallen, after century after century had passed over it of such history as nations sink under, losing heart and union and hope. Look at them when their ill-fortune had culminated in the Ottoman conquest ; look at them after three centuries and a half of Ottoman rule. For they have not perished. In the first place, they exist. They have not disappeared before a stronger race and a more peremptory and energetic national principle. They have not, as a whole, whatever may have happened partially, melted into a new form of people along with their conquerors. They have resisted the shocks before which nations apparently stronger have yielded and, as nations, have disappeared. And next, they have not only resisted dissolution or amalgamation, but in a great degree change. In characteristic endowments, in national and proverbial faults, though centuries of hardship and degradation have doubtless told on the former, they are curiously like what their fathers were. But neither faults, nor gifts reinforcing and giving edge to faults, have produced the usual result. Neither their over-cleverness, nor their lamentable want in many points of moral elevation and strength, have caused the decay which ends in

national death, have so eaten into the ties which keep a society together, that its disorganised elements fly apart and form new combinations. The Mahometan conquest has made large inroads on the Christian populations—in some cases, as in Bosnia and parts of Albania, it absorbed it entirely. But if ever nationality—the pride of country, the love of home, the tie of blood—was a living thing, it has been alive in the Greek race, and in the surrounding races, whatever their origin and language, which it once influenced, and which shared the influences which acted on it. These races whom the Empire of the Cæsars left like scattered sheep to the mercy of the barbarians, lived through a succession of the most appalling storms, and kept themselves together, holding fast, resolute and unwavering, amid all their miseries and all their debasement, to the faith of their national brotherhood. Nothing less promised endurance than their temperament and genius, so easily moved to change, so quick to the perception of self-interest, and ready to discover its paths. Nothing seemed more precarious as a bond than national traditions and national sympathies. But at the end of our modern ages, the race on which Christianity first made an impression still survives, and, though scarred by disaster and deeply wounded by servitude, is now looking forward to a new and happier career.

What saved Greek nationality—saved it in spite of the terrible alliance with external misfortunes, of its

own deep and inherent evils; saved it, I hope, for much better days than it has ever yet seen—was its Christianity. It is wonderful that, even *with* it, Greek society should have resisted the decomposing forces which were continually at work round it and in it; but *without* its religion it must have perished. This was the spring of that obstinate tenacious, national life which persisted in living on though all things conspired for its extinction; which refused to die under corruption or anarchy, under the Crusader's sword, under the Moslem scimitar. To these races Christianity had not only brought a religion, when all religion was worn out among them and evaporated into fables, but it had *made* them—made them once more a people, with common and popular interests of the highest kind; raised them, from mere subjects of the Roman Empire, lost amid its crowd, into the citizens of a great society, having its root and its end above this world, and even in the passage through this world binding men by the most awful and ennobling ties. Christianity was the first friend and benefactor of an illustrious race in the day of its decline and low estate; the Greek race has never forgotten that first benefit, and its unwavering loyalty has been the bond which has kept the race together and saved it.

I think this is remarkable. Here is a race full of flexibility and resource, with unusual power of accommodating itself to circumstances, and ready to do so when its interest prompted, not over-scrupulous, quick

in discovering imposition and pitiless in laughing at pretence—a race made, as it would seem, to bend easily to great changes, and likely, we should have thought, to lose its identity and be merged in a stronger and sterner political association. And to this race Christianity has imparted a corporate toughness and permanence which is among the most prominent facts of history. Say, if you like, that it is an imperfect form of Christianity; that it is the Christianity of men badly governed and rudely taught for centuries, enslaved for other centuries. Say, if you like, that its success has been very qualified in curing the race of its ancient and characteristic faults. Say, too, that in hardening the Greek race to endure, it has developed in them in regard to their religion, an almost Judaic hardness and formalism and rigidity of thought, a local idea of religion which can scarcely conceive of Christianity beyond its seats and its forms in the East. Yet the fact remains, that that easy-going, pliable, childishly changeable Greek race at whom the Romans sneered, has proved, through the deepest misfortunes, one of the most inflexible nationalities that we know of; and that the root of this permanence and power of resisting hostile influences has been in Christianity and the Christian Church.

In this consolidation by Christianity of a national character, in itself least adapted to become anything stable and enduring, we may trace a threefold influence:—

1. In the first place, Christianity impressed on the minds of men with a new force the idea of the eternal and lasting. Into a world of time and death and change, in strange and paradoxical contrast with it, it had come announcing a one everlasting Kingdom of God, and a final victory over the worst that death can do on man. Rome and the Empire claimed to be eternal and unchanging; but they were too visibly liable, as other human greatness, to the shocks of fortune, and the inevitable course of mortal decay. But that everlasting order which was the foundation of all that Christianity supposed and taught, that "House not made with hands," that "Kingdom which cannot be moved," that Temple of souls dwelt in by the Eternal Spirit of God, that Throne of the world on which sate One, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"—this was out of the reach of all mutability. With their belief in Christianity, the believers drank in thoughts of fixedness, permanence, persistency, continuance, most opposite to the tendencies of their natural temperament. The awful seriousness of Christianity, its interpretation of human life and intense appreciation of its purpose, deeply affected, if it could not quell, childish selfishness and trifling; its iron entered into their veins and mingled with their blood. I am not now speaking of the reforming and purifying effects of Christianity on individuals: this is not my subject. But it put before the public mind a new *ideal of character*; an ideal of the deepest earnest-

ness, of the most serious purity, of unlimited self-devotion, of the tenderest sympathy for the poor and the unhappy, of pity and care for the weak, for the sinner. And it prevailed on the public mind to accept it, in exchange for more ancient ideals. Even if it failed to wean men from their vices and lift them to its own height, yet it gave to those whom it could not reform a new respect for moral greatness, a new view of the capabilities of the soul, of the possibilities of human character. It altered permanently the current axioms about the end and value of human life. At least it taught them patience, and hardened them to endure.

2. In the next place, the spirit of brotherhood in Christianity singularly fell in with the social habits and traditions of equality, ineradicable in Greece, and combined with them to produce a very definite feature in the national character. Greek ideas of society and government were always, at bottom, essentially popular ones: Greek revolutions and Greek misfortunes, from the Peloponnesian war to the Roman Conquest, if they had extinguished all hope of realising any more those democratic institutions under which Athens had achieved its wonderful but short-lived greatness, had developed and strengthened the feeling, that Greeks, while there was a broad line between them and those who were not Greeks, themselves stood all on the same social level one with another, and that only personal differences, not differ-

ences of birth, or even of condition or wealth, interfered with the natural equality which was assumed in all their intercourse. When Christianity came with its new principle of a unity, so high and so divine as to throw into the shade all, even the most real, distinctions among men—"Greek and Jew, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free," for all were one in Christ—and when in the Christian Church the slave was thought as precious as the free man in the eyes of his Father above, as much a citizen of the heavenly polity and an heir of its immortality—then the sense of popular unity and of common and equal interests in the whole body, which always had been strong in Greeks, received a seal and consecration, which has fixed it unalterably in the national character. This personal equality existed, and could not be destroyed, under the despotic governments by which, from the time of the Roman Empire till the emancipation of Greece from the Turks, in one shape or another, the nation has been ruled. It marks Greek social relations very observably to this day.

3. Finally, Christianity, the religion of hope, has made the Greek race, in the face of the greatest adversities, a race of hope. In its darkest and most unpromising hours, it has hoped against hope. On the bronze gates of St. Sophia, at Constantinople, may still be seen,—at least it might be seen some years ago,—the words, placed there by its Christian builder, and left there by the scornful ignorance or indifference

of the Ottomans—I. X. NIKA, *Jesus Christ conquers.* It is the expression of that unshaken assurance which in the lowest depths of humiliation has never left the Christian races of the East, that sooner or later theirs is the winning cause. They never have doubted of their future. The first greeting with which Greek salutes Greek on Easter morning, Χριστὸς ἀνέστη, *Christ is risen,* accompanied by the Easter kiss, and answered by the response, ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη, *He is risen indeed,* is both the victorious cry of mortality over the vanquished grave, and also the symbol of a national brotherhood, the brotherhood of a suffering race, bound together by their common faith in a deliverer.

This, it seems to me, Christianity did for a race which had apparently lived its time, and had no future before it—the Greek race in the days of the Cæsars. It created in them, in a new and characteristic degree, national endurance, national fellowship and sympathy, national hope. It took them in the unpromising condition in which it found them under the Empire, with their light, sensual, childish existence, their busy but futile and barren restlessness, their life of enjoyment or of suffering, as the case might be, but in either case purposeless and unmeaning; and by its gift of a religion of seriousness, conviction, and strength it gave them a new start in national history. It gave them an Empire of their own, which, undervalued as it is by those familiar

with the *ultimate* results of Western history, yet withstood the assaults before which, for the moment, Western civilisation sank, and which had the strength to last a life—a stirring and eventful life—of ten centuries. The Greek Empire, with all its evils and weaknesses, was yet in its time the only existing image in the world of a civilised state. It had arts, it had learning, it had military science and power; it was, for its day, the one refuge for peaceful industry. It had a place which we could ill afford to miss in the history of the world. Gibbon, we know, is no lover of anything Byzantine, or of anything Christian; but look at that picture which he has drawn of the Empire in the tenth century—that dark century when all was so hopeless in the West,—read the pages in which he yields to the gorgeous magnificence of the spectacle before him, and describes not only the riches, the pomp, the splendour, the elaborate ceremony of the Byzantine Court and the Byzantine capital, but the comparative prosperity of the provinces, the systematic legislation, the administrative experience and good sense with which the vast machine was kept going and its wealth developed, its military science and skill, the beauty and delicacy of its manufactures, —and then consider what an astonishing contrast to all else in those wild times was presented by the stability, the comparative peace, the culture, the liberal pursuits of this great State, and whether we have not become blind to what it *was*, and *appeared to*

*be*, when it actually existed in the world of which it was the brilliant centre, by confusing it in our thoughts with the miseries of its overthrow :—

"These princes," he says, "might assert with dignity and truth, that of all the monarchs of Christendom they possessed the greatest city, the most ample revenue, the most flourishing and populous state. . . . The subjects of their Empire were still the most dexterous and diligent of nations; their country was blessed by nature with every advantage of soil, climate, and situation; and in the support and restoration of the arts, their patient and peaceful temper was more useful than the warlike spirit and feudal anarchy of Europe. The provinces which still adhered to the Empire were repeopled and enriched by the misfortunes of those which were irrecoverably lost. From the yoke of the Caliphs, the Catholics of Syria, Egypt, and Africa retired to the allegiance of their prince, to the society of their brethren: the moveable wealth, which eludes the search of oppression, accompanied and alleviated their exile; and Constantinople received into her bosom the fugitive trade of Alexandria and Tyre. The chiefs of Armenia and Scythia, who fled from hostile or religious persecution, were hospitably entertained, their followers were encouraged to build new cities and cultivate waste lands. Even the barbarians who had seated themselves in arms in the territory of the Empire were gradually reclaimed to the laws of the church and state." "The

wealth of the province," he proceeds, describing one of them, "and the trust of the revenue were founded on the fair and plentiful produce of trade and manufactures; and some symptoms of a liberal policy may be traced in a law which exempts from all personal taxes the mariners of the province, and all workmen in parchment and purple."

And he goes on to describe, with that curious pursuit of detail in which he delights, the silk looms and their products, and to trace the silk manufacture, from these Greek looms, as it passed through the hands of captive Greek workmen, transported by the Normans to Palermo, and from thence was emulously taken up by the northern Italian cities, to the workshops of Lyons and Spitalfields. Who would think that he was describing what we so commonly think of as the wretched and despicable Lower Greek Empire, without strength or manliness; or that the rich province is what the Turks made into the desolate Morea?

We are accustomed to think only of its corruption and pedantry, its extravagant disputes, its court intrigues and profligacies, its furious factions. But there was really no want of heroic men and noble achievements to show in the course of its annals. Even Gibbon tells us, though he tells us, as usual, with a sneer, of "intrepid"[1] patriarchs of Constantinople, whom we speak of as mere slaves of despotism,

[1] Chap. xlviii. vol. vi. pp. 105, 106.

repeating towards captains and emperors, impatient with passion, or in the flush of criminal success, the bold rebukes of John the Baptist and St. Ambrose. And these captains and emperors appear, many of them, even in his disparaging pages, as no ordinary men. There were lines of rulers in those long ages not unworthy to rank with the great royal houses of the West. There were men, with deep and miserable faults no doubt, but who yet, if their career had been connected with our history, would have been famous among us. Belisarius, Heraclius, Leo the Isaurian,—the Basilian, the Comnenian line,—have a full right to a high place among the rulers and the saviours of nations. The First and the Second Basil of the Macedonian line, the Lawgiver, and the Conqueror: the Comnenian dynasty;—Alexius, who "in a long reign of thirty-seven years subdued and pardoned the envy of his equals, restored the laws of public and private order," cultivated the arts of wealth and science, "and enlarged the limits of the Empire in Europe and Asia";—John, "under whom innocence had nothing to fear and merit everything to hope," and "whose only defect was the frailty of noble minds, the love of military glory";—Manuel, "educated in the silk and purple of the East, but possessed of the iron temper of a soldier, not easily to be paralleled, except in the lives of Richard I. of England and Charles XII. of Sweden":—I am quoting in each instance the epithets and judgment of Gibbon—these are men whom a dif-

ference of taste and historical traditions makes us undervalue as Greeks of the Lower Empire. Let us not be ungrateful to them. Unconquered, when the rest of the Empire fell before the new powers of the world, Byzantium kept alive traditions of learning, of scholarship, of law and administration, of national unity, of social order, of industry, which those troubled and dangerous times could ill afford to lose. To the *improvable* barbarians of the North, to whom Old Rome had yielded, succeeded the *unimprovable* barbarians of the East and Central Asia, and against them, Saracens, Mongols, Turks, the New Rome was the steady and unbroken bulwark, behind which the civilisation of Europe, safe from its mortal foes, slowly recovered and organised itself. Alaric's Goths at the sack of Rome, Platoff's Cossacks at the occupation of Paris, were not greater contrasts to all that is meant by civilisation than were the Latins of the First and Fourth Crusade, the bands of Godfrey de Bouillon, Bohemond, and Tancred, and those of the Bishop of Soissons, the Count of Flanders, and the Marquis of Montferrat, in the great capital of Eastern Christendom, which they wondered at and pillaged. What saved hope for ages, on the edge of the world which was to be the modern one, was the obstinate resistance of Christian nationality to the mounting tide of Asiatic power.

But it was when the Empire perished that it fully appeared how deeply Christianity had modified the

national character. All the world was looking forward to the impossibility of that character holding its own against the pressure of Mahometanism, and to the disappearance by slavery, or forced conversion, of the representatives, in the East, of the Christian family. But the expectation has been falsified. It had not entered into the calculation how much of stubborn, unyielding faith and strength Christianity had introduced beneath the surface of that apparently supple and facile Greek nature. The spring of life was too strong to be destroyed; and now, after steel and fire have done their worst, fresh and vigorous branches are shooting up from the unexhausted root-stock. Then, when the greatness of Constantinople was gone, it appeared how the severe side of Christianity, with its patience and its hopefulness, had left its mark on Greek character, naturally so little congenial to such lessons. Then it appeared what was the difference between a philosophy and literature, and a religion and life. Then, when philosophy and literature, the peculiar glories of the Greek race, may be said to have perished, was seen what was the power of the ruder and homelier teaching—about matters of absorbing interest, the unseen world, the destiny of man—of teachers who believed their own teaching, and lived and died accordingly. Then was seen on the whole nation the fruit of the unpretending Christian virtues which grow from great Christian doctrines, the Cross, the Resurrection—compassionate-

ness, humbleness of mind, self-conquest, zeal, purity. Self-sacrifice became the most natural of duties—self-sacrifice, in all its forms, wise and unwise, noble and extravagant, ascetic renunciation of the world, confessorship and dying for the truth as men died for their country, a lifelong struggle of toil and hardship for a cause not of this world. The lives of great men profoundly and permanently influence national character; and the great men of later Greek memory are saints. They belong to the people more than emperors and warriors; for the Church is of the people. Greeks saw their own nature and their own gifts elevated, corrected, transformed, glorified, in the heroic devotion of Athanasius, who, to all their familiar qualities of mind, brought a tenacity, a soberness, a height and vastness of aim, an inflexibility of purpose, which they admired the more because they were just the powers in which the race failed. They saw the eloquence in which they delighted revive with the fire and imagination and piercing sarcasm of Chrysostom, and their hearts kindled in them when they saw that he was one of those who can dare and suffer as well as speak, and that the preacher who had so sternly rebuked the vices of the multitudes at Antioch and Constantinople was not afraid of the consequences of speaking the truth to an Empress at an Imperial Court. The mark which such men left on Greek society and Greek character has not been effaced to this day, even by the melancholy examples

of many degenerate successors. They have sown a seed which has more than once revived, and which still has in it the promise of life and progress.

Why, if Christianity affected Greek character so profoundly, did it not do more? Why, if it cured it of much of its instability and trifling, did it not also cure it of its falsehood and dissimulation? Why, if it impressed the Greek mind so deeply with the reality of the objects of faith, did it not also check the vain inquisitiveness and spirit of disputatiousness and sophistry, which filled Greek Church history with furious wranglings about the most hopeless problems? Why, if it could raise such admiration for unselfishness and heroic nobleness, has not this admiration borne more congenial fruit? Why, if heaven was felt to be so great and so near, was there in real life such coarse and mean worldliness? Why, indeed?—why have not the healing and renovating forces of which the world is now, as it has ever been, full, worked out their gracious tendencies to their complete and natural effect? It is no question specially belonging to this part of the subject: in every other we might make the same inquiry, and I notice it only lest I should be thought to have overlooked it. "Christianity," it has been said, "varies according to the nature on which it falls." That is, in modern philosophical phrase, what we are taught in the parable of the Sower. It rests at last with man's will and moral nature how far he will, honestly and un-

reservedly, yield to the holy influences which he welcomes, and let them have their "perfect work." But if the influence of Christianity on Greek society has been partial, if it has not weaned it from some of its most characteristic and besetting sins, it has done enough to keep it from destruction. It has saved it; and this is the point on which I insist. Profoundly, permanently, as Christianity affected Greek character, there was much in that character which Christianity failed to reach, much that it failed to correct, much that was obstinately refractory to influences which, elsewhere, were so fruitful of goodness and greatness. The East, as well as the West, has still much to learn from that religion, which each too exclusively claims to understand, to appreciate, and to defend. But what I have tried to set before you is this: the spectacle of a great civilised nation, which its civilisation could not save, met by Christianity in its hour of peril, filled with moral and spiritual forces of a new and unknown nature, arrested in its decay and despair, strengthened to endure amid prolonged disaster, guarded and reserved through centuries of change for the reviving hopes and energies of happier days. To a race bewildered with sophistries, and which by endless disputings had come to despair of any noble conduct of life, Christianity solved its questions, by showing it in concrete examples how to live and to walk; how, in the scale of souls, the lowest might be joined to the highest. Into men,

whom their own passions and subtlety had condemned to listless moral indifference, it breathed enthusiasm; the high practical enthusiasm of truth and a good life. And for a worship, poetically beautiful, but scarcely affecting to be more, it substituted the magnificent eloquence of devotion and faith, the inspired Psalms, the majestic Liturgies. It changed life, by bringing into it a new idea,—the idea of holiness, with its shadow, sin. That the Greek race, which connects us with some of the noblest elements of our civilisation, is still one of the living races of Europe, that it was not trampled, scattered, extinguished, lost, amid the semi-barbarous populations of the East, that it can look forward to a renewed career in the great commonwealth of Christendom—this it owes mainly to its religion.

What great changes of national character the Latin races owed to Christianity will be the inquiry of the next lecture.

## LECTURE II

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE LATIN RACES

UNDER the discipline of Christianity in the Eastern Church the Christians of the East were trained to endurance, to a deep sense of brotherhood, to a faith which could not be shaken in great truths about God and about man, to the recognition of a high moral ideal, to a purer standard of family and social life, to inextinguishable hope. They learned to maintain, under the most adverse and trying circumstances, a national existence, which has lasted more than fifteen centuries. They have been kept, without dying, without apostatising, without merging their nationality in something different, till at last better days seem at hand; and to welcome these days there is vigour and elasticity, a strong spirit of self-reliance, even of ambition. But what appears, at least to us, distant and probably superficial observers, is this. Their religion has strengthened and elevated national character: it seems to have done less to expand and refine it. At any rate, we do not see the evidence of it in what is

almost the only possible evidence of it to strangers, in a rich and varied literature. To their ancient treasures, to the wisdom and eloquence of the great Christian teachers and moralists of the early centuries, such as Basil and Chrysostom, the Greeks have added nothing which can be put on a level with them; nothing worth speaking of in secular literature; nothing of real poetry; nothing with the mark on it of original observation or genius; nothing which has passed local limits to interest the world without. Learning of a certain kind they have ever maintained. Up to the capture of Constantinople by the Ottomans, Greek learning certainly did not contrast unfavourably with the learning of the West; and it was Greek teachers and scholars, flying from the Ottoman sword and the Ottoman tyranny, who brought Greek letters to the schools, the Universities, and the printing presses of the eager and curious West. But it was all ancient learning, or intellectual work connected with ancient learning. There was little to show the thought, the aspirations, the feelings, the character of the present time. All seems dry, stiff, pompous, pedantic, in curious contrast to the naturalness, the perception of the realities of character, the humour, the pathos, which are so often seen in the roughest monastic writings of the same period in the West. Echoes of what seems native poetry, the original expression, more or less graceful or pathetic, of feeling and imagination, come to us from portions of

Eastern Christendom—from Russia, from Servia, perhaps from other Sclavonic races; but little from Greece itself. Besides a few fragments, marked occasionally by genuine touches of feeling, its national poetry, exclusive of the noble but often florid ecclesiastical hymns, consists mainly of Klephtic ballads, recording feats of prowess against the Turks. In curious contrast with the versatility of the old Greeks, the character of their later representatives, with all their liveliness, has in it, along with its staunchness and power of resistance, a stereotyped rigidity and uniformity—wanting play, wanting growth. Looked at by the side of their Western brethren, they resemble the shapes and branch systems of the evergreen pines and firs of their own mountains, so hardy, so stern, often nobly beautiful, but always limited in their monotonous forms, when compared with the varied outline and the luxuriant leafage, ever changing, ever renewed, of the chestnuts of the Apennine forests, or of the oaks and elms of our English fields.

It is in Western Christendom that we must look for the fuller development of the capacities and the originality of man, in those broad varieties of them, which we call national character. There can be no doubt that in the later ages of the world men and nations have been more enterprising, more aspiring, more energetic in the West than in the East; that their history has been more eventful, their revolutions

graver; that they have aimed at more, hoped for more, ventured on more. And the subject of my lecture to-night is the effects of Christianity on the character of what are called the Latin races, especially in Italy and France.

The Latin races occupy the ground where Roman civilisation of the times of the Empire had its seat and main influence. When the Empire fell, its place and local home were taken by nations, closely connected by blood and race with its old subjects, which were to become, in very different ways, two of the foremost of our modern world. We know them well, and they have both of them been very intimately connected with us, in our history, and in the progress of our society and our ideas. With one we have had a rivalry of centuries, which yet has not prevented much sympathy between us, or the manifold and deep influence of one great rival on the intellectual and the political life of the other. To Italy, long bound to us by the ties of a great ecclesiastical organisation, we have, since those ties were broken, been hardly less closely bound by the strong interest created by Italian literature and art, and by the continual personal contact with the country of a stream of travellers. We all of us form an idea, more or less accurate and comprehensive, of what Frenchmen and Italians are like. Take the roughest and rudest shape of this idea, so that it has any feature and distinctness about it, and compare

it with whatever notions we can reach of the people of the same countries in the days of the Empire; with the notion which scholars can derive of them from reading their letters, their poetry, serious and gay, their plays, their laws, their philosophical essays, their political treatises,—with the notion which those who are not scholars get of them from our own historical writers. Two strong impressions, it seems to me, result from such a comparison. The first is, how strangely modern in many ways these ancient Romans look; what strangely modern thoughts they think; what strangely modern words they say. But then, when we have realised how near in many ways their civilisation and culture brought them to our own days, the next feeling is how vast and broad is the interval which lies between our conceptions, when we think of French or Italian character, its moral elements, habits, assumptions, impulses, its governing forces, with the ways in which it exhibits itself, and when we think of the contemporaries of Cicero, of Seneca, of Marcus Aurelius. Much is like; much in the modern form recalls the past; but in the discriminating and essential points, how great a difference.

I am not going to attempt anything like a survey and comparison, even of the most general kind, of these contrasted characters. All I propose to do is to take one or two important points of difference between them, and trace, if possible, where and from what causes the differences arose.

Let us, then, take the two chief peoples of what is called—what they themselves call—the Latin race; the Italians and the French. Rome had so impressed her own stamp on the populations which inherited what was then called Gaul, that no revolutions have effaced it. Though there has been since the fall of the Empire so large an infusion into them of Teutonic blood, and the name by which they are now known is a Teutonic one, yet Latin influence has proved the prevailing and the dominant one among them; a language of Latin stock and affinities expresses and controls their thoughts and associations: in the great grouping of modern nations, France, as a whole, goes with those of her provinces which geographically belong to the South, and claim a portion of the Mediterranean shore. Not forgetting their immense differences, still we may for our purpose class these two great nations together, in contrast with the people who, before them, in the great days of Rome, occupied the south of Europe, and ruled on the Mediterranean. And in those times, when Gaul was still but a province, we must take its provincial society, as represented by the better-known society of the governing race and of the seat of empire, whose ideas and manners that provincial society undoubtedly reflected and copied. Comparing, then, the Italians and French of modern times and history with the Romans of the Imperial city, of the Imperial peninsula, and of the provinces, one striking

difference seems at once to present itself before our eyes.

1. It is the different sphere and space in national character occupied by the *affections*. I use the word in the widest sense, and without reference now to the good or bad, the wise or unwise, the healthy or morbid exercise of them. But I observe that in the Roman character the affections — though far, indeed, from being absent, for how could they be in a race with such high points of human nobleness? — were yet habitually allowed but little play, and, indeed, in their most typical and honoured models of excellence jealously repressed—and that in the modern races, on the other hand, which stand in their place, character is penetrated and permeated, visibly, notoriously, by a development and life of the affections and the emotional part of our nature to which we can see nothing parallel in ancient times. I suppose this contrast is on the surface, in the most general and popular conceptions of these characters. One observation will at once bring up into our minds the difference I speak of. Take some of our common forms of blame and depreciation. We frequently attribute to our French neighbours, and still more to Italians, a softness of nature, a proneness to indulge in an excessive, and what seems to us unreal, opening and pouring forth of the heart, a love of endearing and tender words, an exaggerated and uncontrolled exhibition of feeling, which to us seems mawkish and unmanly, if not in-

sincere; we think we trace it in their habits, in their intercourse, in their modes of address, in their letters, in their devotions; we call it sentimental, or effeminate; we laugh at it as childish, or we condemn and turn away from it as unhealthy. But who would dream of coupling the word "sentimental" with anything Roman? Who, for instance, though we have a plaintive Tibullus and a querulous Ovid, could imagine a Roman Rousseau? That well-known idea which we call "sentiment" did not exist for them any more than that which we call "charity." They might be pompous; they might profess, as men do now, feelings in excess and in advance of what they really had; they could, for they were men, be deeply moved; they could be passionate, they could be affectionate, they could be tender. I do not forget their love poems, gay, playful, or melancholy; I do not forget their epitaphs on their dead, the most deeply touching of all epitaphs for the longing and profound despair with which they bid their eternal farewell; I do not forget the domestic virtues of many Roman households, the majestic chastity of their matrons, all that is involved of love and trust and reverence in their favourite and untranslatable word *pietas*; the frequent attachment even of the slave, the frequent kindness of the master. It was not that there were not affections in so great a people. But affections with them were looked on with mistrust and misgiving; it was the proper thing to repress, to disown them; they forced their way,

like some irresistible current, through a hard stern crust, too often in the shape of passion, and were not welcomed and honoured when they came. Between Roman gravity and Roman dignity on the one hand, and Roman coarseness and brutality, Roman pride, Roman vice, on the other hand, there was no room for the danger and weakness of sentimentalism—for it is a danger which implies that men have found out the depth, the manifoldness, the deep delight of the affections, and that an atmosphere has been created in which they have thriven and grown into their innumerable forms. The one affection which the true Roman thought noble and safe and worthy, the one affection which he could trust unsuspected and unchecked, was the love of his country,—his obstinate, never-flagging passion for the greatness and public good of Rome.

I have spoken of the unfavourable side of this increased development of the emotional part of the character in the Southern nations, because I wished to insist strongly on the fact itself of the change. But though this ready overflow of the affections can be morbid and may be weak, we should be not only unjust, but stupid and ignorant, to overlook the truth, that in itself it is also at the bottom of what is characteristically beautiful and most attractive in the people of the South. If you have ever met with anything in character, French or Italian, which specially charmed you, either in literature or in real life, I am sure that

you would find the root and the secret of it in the fulness and the play of the affections; in their unfolding and in their ready disclosure; in the way in which they have blossomed into flowers of strange richness and varied beauty; in the inexpressible charm and grace and delicacy and freedom which they have infused into word and act and demeanour, into a man's relations with his family, his parents, his brothers and sisters, into his friendships, and if he has been a religious man, into his religious life. In good and bad literature, in the books and in the manners which have half ruined France, and in those which are still her redemption and hope, still you find, in one way or another, the dominant and animating element in some strong force and exhibition of the affections. You will see it in such letters as those of Madame de Sévigné. You may see it in the pictures of a social life almost at one time peculiar to France—a life so full of the great world and refined culture, and the gaiety and whirl of high and brilliant circles in a great capital, yet withal so charmingly and unaffectedly simple, unselfish, and warm, so really serious at bottom, it may be, so profoundly self-devoted: such a book as one that has lately been lying on our tables, Madame Augustus Craven's *Récit d'une Sœur*, a sister's story of the most ordinary, and yet of the deepest family union, family joys, family attachments, family sorrows and partings,—a story of people living their usual life in the great world, yet as natural and

tender and unambitious as if the great world did not exist for them. You may see the same thing in their records of professedly devotional lives,—in what we read, for instance, about the great men and women of Port-royal, about Fénélon, about St. Francis de Sales, or, to come later down, about Lacordaire, or Eugénie de Guérin, or Montalembert. In French eloquence, very noble when it is real—in French bombast, inimitable, unapproachable in the exquisiteness of its absurdity and nonsense; — whether it is what is beautiful or contemptible, whether it subdues and fascinates, or provokes, or amuses you, the mark and sign is there of a nature in which the affections claim and are allowed, in their real or their counterfeit forms, ample range and full scope; where they are ever close to the surface, as well as working in the depths; where they suffuse all life, and spontaneously and irresistibly colour thought and speech; where they play about the whole character in all its movements, like the lightning about the clouds of the summer evening.

And so with the Italians. The great place which the affections have taken in their national character, and the ways in which the affections unfold and reveal themselves, are distinctive and momentous. More than genius by itself, more than the sagacity and temperate good sense which Italians claim, or than the craft with which others have credited them, this power of the affections has determined the place of Italy in modern civilisation. The weakness of which

her literature and manners have most to be ashamed, and the loftiness and strength of which she may be proud, both come from the ruling and prominent influence of the affections, and the indulgence, wise or unwise, of their claims. From it has come the indescribable imbecility of the Italian poetasters. From it has come the fire, the depth, the nobleness of the Italian poets; and not of them only, but of writers who, with much that is evil, have much that is both manly and touching—the Italian novelists, the Italian satirists. It has given their spell not only to the sonnets of Michel Angelo, but to the story of Manzoni, and to the epigrams, so fierce and bitter, but so profoundly pathetic, of Leopardi and Giusti. And you must not think that this is a thing of comparatively modern times. This spectacle of the affections bursting in their new vigour from the bands or the deadness of the old world soon meets us in the middle ages. Take, for instance, — an extreme instance, if you will, — one of the favourite Italian saints, St. Francis; one who both reflected and also evoked what was in the heart of the people; one who to us is apt to seem simply an extravagant enthusiast, but was once a marvellous power in the world, and who is beginning once more to interest our own very different age,— witness Mrs. Oliphant's life of him in the *Sunday Library*. In him you may see the difference between the old and the new Italians. An old Roman might have turned stoic or cynic: an old Roman might have

chosen to be poor, have felt the vanity of the world, have despised and resigned it. But when St. Francis resolves to be poor he does not stop there. His purpose blossoms out into the most wonderful development of the affections, of all that is loving, of all that is sympathetic, of all that is cheerful and warm and glad and gracious. Poverty he speaks of as his dear and glorious Bride, and the marriage of Francis and Poverty becomes one of the great themes of song and art; there must be something along with his tremendous self-sacrifice which shall invest it with the charm of the affections. Stern against privation and pain and the face of death as the sternest of Romans, his sternness passed on into a boundless energy of loving, a fulness of joy and delight, which most of us feel more hard to understand than his sternness. "He was a man," says Mrs. Oliphant, "overflowing with sympathy for man and beast—for God's creatures—wherever he encountered them. Not only was every man his brother, but every animal—the sheep in the fields, the birds in the branches, the brother ass on which he rode, the sister bees who took refuge in his protection. He was the friend of everything that suffered and rejoiced. . . . And by this divine right of nature everything trusted in him. . . . For he loved everything that had life.

> He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.

"Such was the unconscious creed of the prophet of Assisi;" which made him salute the birds as his sisters in praising God, and the defenceless leveret as his brother; which inspired the legends of his taming fierce "Brother Wolf" in the streets of Gubbio; which dictated his "Canticle of the Creatures," praising God for all things He had made to give men help and joy — our brother the sun, our sisters the moon and the lovely stars, our "humble and precious" sister water, our brother fire, "bright and pleasant and very mighty;" praising his Lord for those who pardon one another for His Son's sake, and stilling with the spell of his song the rage of civil discord; praising his Lord, as the end drew near, "for our sister the death of the body, from which no man escapeth." This is what you see in one who in that age, among those people, had access, unabashed and honoured, to the seats of power; who cast a charm over Italian democracies; who woke up a response in the hearts at once of labourers and scholars. He is a man who in ancient Rome is inconceivable at once in his weakness and his strength. This is what I mean by the changed place of the affections in the new compared with the old Italians.

2. I will notice another point of difference between the ancient and modern nations of the south of Europe. It can hardly be said that the Romans were, in any eminent sense, an imaginative people. I know that I am speaking of the countrymen of

Lucretius and Catullus, of Virgil and Horace. And of course there was imagination in the grand ideas of rule and empire which filled the Roman mind. But they had not that great gift of which art is born; the eye to discern the veiled beauty of which the world is full, in form, in numbers, in sounds, in proportion, in human expression, in human character, the sympathy which can unveil and embody that beauty in shapes which are absolutely new creations, things new in history and in what exists. They had not that wonderful native impulse and power which called into being the Homeric poems, the stage of Athens, the architecture of the Parthenon, the sculpture of Phidias and Praxiteles, the painting of Polygnotus, the lyric poetry of Simonides and Pindar. I hope you will not suppose that I am insensible to the manifold beauty or magnificence of what Roman art produced in literature, in building, in bust and statue, in graceful and fanciful ornament. But in the general history of art, Roman art seems to occupy much the same place as the age of Dryden and Pope occupies in the history of our own literature. Dryden and Pope are illustrious names; but English poetry would be something very different from what it is if they were its only or its chief representatives. They might earn us the credit of fire, and taste, and exquisite and delicate finish of workmanship; nay, of a cautious boldness of genius, and chastened venturesomeness of invention; they would not entitle our literature to the praise of ima-

ginativeness and originality. For that we must look to Chaucer and Shakespeare and Milton, and to names which are yet recent and fresh among us; and I can hardly count the beautiful poetry of Rome to be of this order, or to disclose the same kind of gifts. The greatest of Roman poets, in the grandest of his bursts of eloquence, confessed the imaginative inferiority of his people, and bade them remember that their arts, their calling, their compensation, were to crush the mighty, to establish peace, and give law to the world.[1]

I need not remind you how different in genius and faculty were the later nations of the south of Europe. Degenerate as their Roman ancestors would have accounted them for having lost the secret of conquest and empire, they won and long held a supremacy, in some points hardly yet contested, in the arts, in which imagination, bold, powerful, and delicate, invents and creates and shapes. In the noblest poetry, in painting, in sculpture, in music, Italians led the way and set the standard; in some provinces of art they have been rivalled; in some, in time, surpassed; in some they are still unapproached. But without laying stress on their masterpieces, the point is that in

[1] Excudent alii spirantia mollius æra;
Credo equidem: vivos ducent de marmore vultus;
Orabunt causas melius, cœlique meatus
Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent;
Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento:
Hæ tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.

the descendants of the subjects of the Empire, so hard and prosaic and businesslike, the whole temper and tendency of these races is altered. A new and unsuspected spring in their nature has been touched, and a current gushes forth, no more to fail, of new aspirations and ideas, new feelings to be expressed, new thoughts to be embodied. Imaginative faculty, in endlessly varying degrees of force and purity, becomes one of the prominent and permanent characteristics of the race. Crowds of unknown poets and painters all over Italy have yielded to the impulse, and attempted to realise the ideal beauty that haunted them; and the masterpieces which are the flower and crown of all art are but the picked and choice examples out of a crop of like efforts—a crop with numberless failures, more or less signal, but which do nothing to discourage the passionate wish to employ the powers of the imagination. The place of one of the least imaginative among the great races of history is taken by one of the most imaginative—one most strongly and specially marked by imaginative gifts, and most delighting in the use of them.

Whence has come this change over the character of these nations? Whence, in these races sprung from the subjects of the sternest of Empires and moulded under its influence, this reversal of the capital and leading marks, by which they are popularly known and characterised; this development of the emotional part of their nature, this craving after the

beautiful in art? Whence the inexhaustible fertility and inventiveness, the unfailing taste and tact and measure, the inexpressible charm of delicacy and considerate forethought and exuberant sympathy, which are so distinctly French, and which mark what is best in French character and French writing? Whence that Italian splendour of imagination and profound insight into those subtle connections by which objects of the outward senses stir and charm and ennoble the inward soul? What was the discipline which wrought all this? Who was it, who in the ages of confusion which followed the fall of the Empire, sowed and ripened the seeds which were to blossom into such wondrous poetry in the fourteenth century, into such a matchless burst of art in the fifteenth and sixteenth? Who touched in these Latin races the hidden vein of tenderness, the "fount of tears," the delicacies and courtesies of mutual kindness, the riches of art and the artist's earnestness? Who did all this, I do not say in the fresh natures of the Teutonic invaders, for whom the name barbarians is a very inadequate and misleading word, but in the spoiled and hardened children of an exhausted and ruined civilisation?

Can there be any question as to what produced this change? It was the conversion of these races to the faith of Christ. Revolutions of character like this do not, of course, come without many influences acting together; and in this case the humiliations and long affliction of the Northern invasions produced their

deep effects. Hearts were broken and pride was tamed, and in their misery men took new account of what they needed one from another. But the cause of causes, which made other causes fruitful, was the presence, in the hour of their distress, of the Christian Church, with its message, its teaching, and its discipline. The Gospel was—in a way in which no religion, nothing which spoke of the unseen and the eternal, ever had been or could be—a religion of the affections, a religion of sympathy. By what it said, by the way in which it said it, Christianity opened absolutely a new sphere, new possibilities, a new world, to human affections. This is what we see in the conversions, often so sudden, always so fervent, in the New Testament, and in the early ages. Three great revelations were made by the Gospel, which seized on human nature, and penetrated and captivated that part of it by which men thought and felt, their capacities for love and hope, for grief and joy. There was a new idea and sense of sin; there was the humiliation, the companionship with us in our mortal life, of the Son of God, the Cross and the Sacrifice, of Him who was also the Most Highest; there was the new brotherhood of men with men in the family and Church of Christ and God. To the proud, the reserved, the stern, the frivolous, the selfish, who met the reflection of their own very selves in all society around them, there was disclosed a new thing in the human heart and a new thing in the relations of men

to God and to one another. There woke up a hitherto unknown consciousness of the profound mystery of sin — certain, strange, terrible; and with it new searchings of heart, new agonies of conscience, a new train of the deepest feelings, the mingled pains and joys of penitence, the liberty of forgiveness, the princely spirit of sincerity, the ineffable peace of God. And with it came that unimaginable unveiling of the love of God, which overwhelms the imagination which once takes it in, alike whether the mind accepts or rejects it; which grave unbelief recoils from, as "that strange story of a crucified God"; which the New Testament expresses in its record of those ever-amazing words, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"—the appearance in the world of time of the everlasting Word, of Christ the Sacrifice, Christ the Healer, Christ the Judge, Christ the Consoler of Mankind and their Eternal Portion. And then it made men feel that, bound together in that august and never-ending brotherhood with the Holy One and the Blessed, they had ties and bonds one to another which transformed all their duties into services of tenderness and love. Once caught sight of, once embodied in the words of a spokesman and interpreter of humanity like St. Paul, these revelations could never more be forgotten. These things were really believed; they were ever present to thought and imagination, revolutionising

life, giving birth to love stronger than death, making death beautiful and joyful. The great deeps of man's nature were broken up—one deep of the heart called to another, while the waves and storms of that great time of judgment were passing over the world. Here was the key which unlocked men's tenderness; here, while they learned a new enthusiasm, they learned what they had never known of themselves, the secret of new affections. And in the daily and yearly progress of the struggling Church, these affections were fed and moulded, and deeply sunk into character. The Latin races learned this secret, in the community of conviction and hope, in the community of suffering, between the high-born and the slave,—they learned it when they met together at the place of execution, in the blood-stained amphitheatre, in the crowded prison-house, made musical with the "sweet solemnities of gratitude and praise," with the loving and high-hearted farewells of resignation and patience; they learned it in the Catacombs, at the graves of the martyrs, in the Eucharistic Feast, in the sign of the Redeemer's Cross, in the kiss of peace; they learned it in that service of perpetual prayer, in which early Latin devotion gradually found its expression and embodied its faith,—in those marvellous combinations of majesty and tenderness, so rugged yet so piercing and so pathetic, the Latin hymns; in those unequalled expressions, in the severest and briefest words, of the deepest needs of the soul, and of all the ties which bind

men to God and to one another, the Latin Collects; in the ever-repeated Psalter, in the *Miserere* and *De Profundis*, in the Canticles of morning and evening and the hour of rest and of death, in the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis*, in the "new song" of the awful *Te Deum*—

Deep as the grave, high as the Eternal Throne.

They learned it in that new social interest, that reverence and compassion and care for the poor, which, beginning in the elder Scriptures, in the intercessions of the Psalms for the poor and needy, and in the Prophetic championship of their cause against pride and might, had become, since the Sermon on the Mount, the characteristic of Christ's religion. They learned it in that new commandment of the Divine Founder of the Church, the great all-embracing Christian word, charity. These are things which, sinking deep into men's hearts, alter, perhaps without their knowing it, the staple of their character. Here it is that we see, unless I am greatly mistaken, the account of one great change in the population of the South in modern and ancient times; of the contrast caused by the place which the affections occupy, compared with the sternness and hardness alike of what was heroic and what was commonplace in ancient Italian character. Imagine a Roman of the old stamp making the sign of the cross. He might perhaps do it superstitiously, as consuls might go to see the sacred chickens feed, or augurs might smile at

one another; but imagine him doing it, as Dante, or Savonarola, or Pascal might do it, to remind himself of a Divine Friend, "Who had loved him and given Himself for him."

And the same account, it seems to me, is to be given of the other great change in Southern character; the development of imaginative originality and of creative genius in all branches of art in later times. It was that the preaching and belief of the Gospel opened to these races a new world, such as they had never dreamed of, not only of truth and goodness, but of Divine beauty. Rugged and unlovely, indeed, was all that the outward aspect of religion at first presented to the world: it was, as was so eloquently said[1] some time ago in this place, the contrast presented by the dim and dreary Catacombs underground to the pure and brilliant Italian sky and the monuments of Roman wealth and magnificence above. But in that poor and mean society, which cared so little for the things of sense and sight, there were nourished and growing up—for, indeed, it was the Church of the God of all glory and all beauty, the chosen home of the Eternal Creating Spirit—thoughts of a perfect beauty above this world; of a light and a glory which the sun could never see: of types, in character and in form, of grace, of sweetness, of nobleness, of tenderness, of perfection, which could find no home in time—which were of the eternal and the unseen on which human

[1] By Professor Lightfoot.

life bordered, and which was to it, indeed, "no foreign land." There these Romans unlearned their old hardness and gained a new language and new faculties. Hardly, and with difficulty, and with scanty success, did they at first strive to express what glowed with such magnificence to their inward eye, and kindled their souls within them. Their efforts were rude—rude in art, often hardly less rude in language. But that Divine and manifold idea before them, they knew that it was a reality; it should not escape them, though it still baffled them;—they would not let it go. And so, step by step, age after age, as it continued to haunt their minds, it gradually grew into greater distinctness and expression. From the rough attempts in the Catacombs or the later mosaics, in all their roughness so instinct with the majesty and tenderness and severe sweetness of the thoughts which inspired them—from the emblems and types and figures, the trees and the rivers of Paradise, the dove of peace, the palms of triumph, the Good Shepherd, the hart no longer "desiring," but at last *tasting* "the water-brooks," from the faint and hesitating adumbrations of the most awful of human countenances—from all these feeble but earnest attempts to body forth what the soul was full of, Christian art passed, with persistent undismayed advance, through the struggles of the middle ages to the inexpressible delicacy and beauty of Giotto and Fra Angelico, to the Last Supper of Lionardo, to the highest that the human mind ever

imagined of tenderness and unearthly majesty, in the Mother and the Divine Son of the Madonna di San Sisto. And the same with poetry. The poetry of which the Christian theology was full from the first wrought itself in very varying measures, but with profound and durable effort, into the new mind and soul of reviving Europe, till it gathered itself up from an infinite variety of sources, history and legend and scholastic argument and sacred hymn, to burst forth in one mighty volume, in that unique creation of the regenerated imagination of the South,—the eventful poem which made the Italians one, whatever might become of Italy,—the sacred song which set forth the wonderful fortunes of the soul of man, under God's government and judgment, its loss, its discipline, its everlasting glory—the *Divina Commedia* of Dante.

I will illustrate these changes by two comparisons. First, as to the development of the imaginative faculty. Compare, and I confine the comparison to this single point—compare, as to the boldness, and originality, and affluence of the creative imagination—the *Æneid* of Virgil and the *Divina Commedia* of Dante, whose chief glory it was to be Virgil's scholar. The *Divina Commedia* may, indeed, be taken as the measure and proof of the change which had come over Southern thought and character since the fall of the Empire. There can be no question how completely it reflected the national mind, how deeply the national mind responded to it. Springing full formed and complete

from its creator's soul, without model or precedent, it was at once hailed throughout the Peninsula, and acknowledged to be as great as after ages have thought it; it rose at once into its glory. Learned and unlearned, princes and citizens, recognised in it the same surpassing marvel that we in our day behold in some great scientific triumph; books and commentaries were written about it; chairs were founded in Italian Universities to lecture upon it. In the *Divina Commedia* Dante professes to have a teacher, an unapproachable example, a perfect master and guide;—Virgil, the honour and wonder of Roman literature. Master and scholar, the Mantuan of the age of Augustus, and the Florentine citizen of the age of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, his devout admirer, were, it need not be said, essentially different; but the point of difference on which I now lay stress is the place which the affections, in their variety and fulness and perpetual play, occupy in the works of writers so closely related to one another. From the stately grace, the "supreme elegance," from the martial and senatorial majesty of the Imperial poem, you come, in Dante, on severity indeed, and loftiness of word and picture and rhythm; but you find the poem pervaded and instinct with human affections of every kind; the soul is free, and every shade of its feelings, its desires, its emotions, finds its expressive note; they pass from high to low, from deep to bright, through a scale of infinite range and changefulness; you are astonished to find moods

of feeling which you thought peculiar and unobserved in yourself noted by the poet's all-embracing sympathy. But this is no part of the Latin poet's experience, at least of his poetic outfit; such longings, such anxieties, such despair, such indignation, such gracious sweetness, such fire of holy wrath, such fire of Divine love, familiar to our modern world, to our modern poetry, are strange to Virgil. Nay, in his day, to the greatest masters of the human soul, to the noblest interpreters of its ideals, they had not yet been born. I suppose that in Virgil the places where we should look for examples of this bursting out of the varied play of the affections, native, profound, real, would be the account of the last fatal night of Troy, the visit to the regions and shades of the dead, the death of Pallas and his slayer Turnus, the episode, above all, of the soldier friends, Nisus and the young Euryalus. Who shall say that there is any absence of tender and solemn feeling? The Italian poet owns, with unstinted and never-tiring homage, that here he learnt the secret and the charm of poetry. But compare on this one point —viz. the presence, the vividness, the naturalness, the diversity, the frankness, of human affection,—compare with these passages almost any canto taken at random of the *Divina Commedia*, and I think you would be struck with the way in which, in complete contrast with the *Æneid*, the whole texture of the poem is penetrated and is alive with feeling; with all forms of grief and pity and amazement, with all forms of love

and admiration and delight and joy. In the story of Francesca, in the agony of the Tower of Famine, in the varied endurance and unfailing hope of the Purgatorio, in the joys and songs of the Paradiso, we get new and never-forgotten glimpses into the abysses and the capacities of the soul of man.

In the next place, what I seek to illustrate is the difference in the place occupied by the affections in men of the old and the new race, in the same great national group, a difference made, as I conceive, by Christianity. Let us take, as one term of the comparison, the great and good Emperor Marcus Aurelius. His goodness is not only known from history, but we also have the singular and inestimable advantage of possessing "a record of his inward life, his *Journal*, or *Commentaries*, or *Meditations*, or *Thoughts*, for by all these names has the work been called." I take this description from an essay on him by Mr. Matthew Arnold, which gives what seems to me a beautiful and truthful picture of one of the most genuine and earnest and elevated souls of the ancient world. I cannot express my wonder, my admiration, my thankfulness, every time I open his book, and remember that it was written by a Roman Emperor in the midst of war and business, and remember also what a Roman Emperor, the master of the world, might in those days be, and what he often was. What is so touching is the mixture of heroic truth and purpose, heroic in its self-command and self-surrender, with a deep tenderness

not the less evident because under austere restraint. "It is by its accent of emotion," says Mr. Arnold, "that the morality of M. Aurelius acquires its special character, and reminds one of Christian morality. The sentences of Seneca are stimulating to the intellect; the sentences of Epictetus are fortifying to the character; the sentences of Marcus Aurelius find their way to the soul." In his opening pages, written apparently in camp in a war against the wild tribes of the Danube, he goes over in memory all his friends, remembering the several good examples he had seen in each, the services, great and small, to his moral nature he had received from each, and then thankfully refers all to the Divine power and providence which had kept his life, thanking the gods, as Bishop Andrews thanks God in his devotions, for his good parents and good sister, "for teachers kind, benefactors never to be forgotten, intimates congenial, friends sincere . . . for all who had advantaged him by writings, converse, patterns, rebukes, even injuries" . . . "for nearly everything good"—thanking them that he was kept from folly and shame and sin—thanking them that "though it was his mother's fate to die young, it was from her," he says, "that he learned piety and beneficence, and abstinence not only from evil deeds but from evil thoughts"—"that she had spent the last years of her life with him;" "that whenever I wished to help any man in his need, I was never told that I had not the means to do it; . . .

that I have a wife, so obedient, so affectionate, and so simple; that I have such good masters for my children."

Two centuries later we come upon another famous book, Latin in feeling, and in this case in language, —the record of the history and experience of a soul thirsting and striving after the best. After the Meditations of the Roman Emperor come the "Confessions" of the Christian saint—St. Augustine. It is not to my purpose to compare these two remarkable books except in this one point. In Marcus Aurelius, emotion there is, affection, love, gratitude to a Divine Power which he knows not; but his feelings refrain from speaking,—they have not found a language. In St. Augustine's Confessions they have learned to speak, —they have learned, without being ashamed of themselves, without pretence of unworthiness, to pour out of their fulness. The chain is taken off the heart; the lips are unloosed. In both books there is a retrospect, earnest, honest, thankful, of the writer's providential education; in both, the writers speak of what they owe to their mother's care and love. Both (the words of one are few) are deeply touching. But read the burst of passionate praise and love to God with which Augustine's Confessions open—read the account of his mother's anxieties during his wild boyhood and youth, of his mother's last days, and of the last conversations between mother and son in "the house looking into the garden at Ostia;" and I think we

shall say that a new and hitherto unknown fountain of tenderness and peace and joy had been opened, deep, calm, unfailing, and that what had opened it was man's new convictions of his relation to a living God of love, the Lord and object and portion of hearts and souls. "Thou madest us for Thyself," is his cry, "and our heart is restless till it repose in Thee." Here is the spring and secret of this new affection, this new power of loving:—

"What art Thou, O my God? What art Thou, I beseech Thee, but the Lord my God? For who is God, besides our Lord,—Who is God, besides our God? O Thou Supreme; most merciful; most just; most secret, most present; most beautiful, most mighty, most incomprehensible; most constant, and yet changing all things; immutable, never new and never old, and yet renewing all things; ever in action, and ever quiet; keeping all, yet needing nothing; creating, upholding, filling, protecting, nourishing, and perfecting all things. . . . And what shall I say? O my God, my life, my joy, my holy dear delight! Or what can any man say, when he speaketh of Thee? And woe to those that speak not of Thee, but are silent in Thy praise; for even those who speak most of Thee may be accounted to be but dumb. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, that I may speak unto Thee and praise Thy name."

To the light-hearted Greeks Christianity had turned its face of severity, of awful resolute hope.

The final victory of Christ, and, meanwhile, patient endurance in waiting for it—this was its great lesson to their race. To the serious, practical, hard-natured Roman, it showed another side—"love, joy, peace"; an unknown wealth of gladness and thankfulness and great rejoicing. It stirred his powerful but somewhat sluggish soul; it revealed to him new faculties, disclosed new depths of affection, won him to new aspirations and new nobleness. And this was a new and real advance and rise in human nature. This expansion of the power of feeling and loving and imagining, in a whole race, was as really a new enlargement of human capacities, a new endowment and instrument and grace, as any new and permanent enlargement of the intellectual powers; as some new calculus, or the great modern conquests in mechanical science, or in the theory and development of music. The use that men or generations have made of those enlarged powers, of whatever kind, is another matter. Each gift has its characteristic perversions; each perversion has its certain and terrible penalty. We all know but too well that this change has not cured the Southern races of national faults; that the tendencies which it has encouraged have been greatly abused. It has not extirpated falsehood, idleness, passion, ferocity. That quickened and fervid imagination, so open to impressions and eager to communicate them, has debased religion and corrupted art. But if this cultivation of the affections and stimulus given

to the imagination have been compatible with much evil,—with much acquiescence in wrong and absurdity, with much moral stagnation, much inertness of conscience, much looseness of principle, — it must be added, with some of the darkest crimes and foulest corruptions in history,—yet, on the other hand, it has been, in the Southern nations, the secret of their excellence, and their best influences. This new example and standard of sweetness, of courtesy, of affectionateness, of generosity, of ready sympathy, of delight in the warm outpouring of the heart, of grace, of bright and of pathetic thought, of enthusiasm for high and noble beauty—what would the world have been without it? Of some of the most captivating, most ennobling instances which history and society have to show, of what is greatest, purest, best in our nature, this has been the condition and the secret. And for this great gift and prerogative, that they have produced not only great men like those of the elder race, captains, rulers, conquerors, — not only men greater than they, lords in the realm of intelligence, its discoverers and its masters,—but men high in that kingdom of the Spirit and of goodness which is as much above the order of intellect as intellect is above material things,—for this the younger races of the South are indebted to Christianity.

## LECTURE III

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE TEUTONIC RACES

At the time when the Roman Empire was the greatest power in the world, and seemed the firmest, a race was appearing on the scene which excited a languid feeling of uneasiness among Roman statesmen, and an artificial interest among Roman moralists. The statesman thought that this race might be troublesome as a neighbour, if it was not brought under the Roman rule of conquest. The moralists from their heights of civilisation looked with curiosity on new examples of fresh and vigorous nature, and partly in disgust, partly in quest of unused subjects for rhetorical declamation, saw in them, in the same spirit as Rousseau in later times, a contrast between their savage virtues and Roman degeneracy. There was enough in their love of enterprise and love of fighting to make their wild and dreary country a good exercise-ground for the practice of serious war by the Legions; and gradually a line of military cantonments along the frontier of the Rhine and the Danube grew into important pro-

vincial towns, the advanced guard of Roman order against the darkness and anarchy of the wilderness outside. When the Roman chiefs were incapable or careless, the daring of the barbarians, their numbers, and their physical strength made their hostility formidable; the Legions of Varus perished in the defiles of the German forests, by a disaster like the defeat of Braddock in America, or the catastrophe of Afghanistan; and Roman Emperors were proud to add to their titles one derived from successes, or at least campaigns, against such fierce enemies. The Romans —why, we hardly know—chose to call them, as they called the Greeks, by a name which was not their own; to the Romans they were Germans; to themselves they were Diutisc, Thiudisco, Teutsch, Deutscher, Latinised into Teutons. What they were in themselves, in their ways and thoughts, the Romans in general cared as much as we in general care about the black tribes of the interior of Africa or the Tartar nomads of Central Asia,—must we not almost add, about the vast and varied populations of our own India? What struck the Romans most was that alternation of savage energy and savage indolence and lethargy, which is like the successive ferocity and torpor of the vulture and the tiger. What also partly impressed them was the austerity and purity of their manners, the honour paid to their women, the amount of labour allotted or entrusted to them. But, after all, they were barbarians, not very interesting except

to philosophers, not very menacing except to the imagination of alarmists; needing to be kept in order, of course, as all wild forces do, but not beyond the strength, the majesty, and the arts of the Empire to control and daunt. Tacitus describes the extermination of a large tribe by the jealousy and combination of its neighbours; he speaks of it with satisfaction as the riddance of an inconvenience, and expresses an opinion that if ever the fortunes of the Empire should need it, the discord of its barbarian neighbours might be called into play. But not even he seriously apprehended that the fortunes of the Empire would fail before the barbarian hordes. There was one apparently widespread confederacy among the tribes, which for a time disquieted Marcus Aurelius; but the storm passed—and this "formidable league, the only one that appears in the two first centuries of the Imperial history, was entirely dissipated, without leaving any traces behind in Germany." No one then dreamed that they beheld in that race the destroyers and supplanters of the ancient civilisation. Still less did any one then dream that in the forests and morasses of that vast region—"peopled by the various tribes of one great nation, and comprising the whole of modern Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Livonia, Prussia, and the greater part of Poland"—were the fathers of a nobler and grander world than any that history had yet known; that here was the race which, under many names, Franks and Allemanns, Angles

and Saxons and Jutes, Burgundians, Goths, Lombards, was first to overrun, and then revivify exhausted nations; that it was a race which was to assert its chief and lordly place in Europe, to occupy half of a new-found world, to inherit India, to fill the islands of unknown seas; to be the craftsmen, the traders, the colonists, the explorers of the world. That it should be the parent of English sailors, of German soldiers, this may not be so marvellous. That from it should have come conquerors, heroes, statesmen, "men of blood and iron,"—nay, great rulers and mighty kings —the great Charles, Saxon Ottos, Franconian Henrys, Swabian Frederics, Norman Williams, English Edwards, seems in accordance with the genius of the countrymen of Arminius, the destroyer of the legions of Augustus. But it is another thing to think that from the wild people described by Tacitus, or in the ninth chapter of Gibbon, should have sprung Shakespeare and Bacon, Erasmus and Albert Dürer, Leibnitz and Goethe; that this race should have produced an English court of justice, English and German workshops of thought and art, English and German homes, English and German religious feeling, and religious earnestness.

I need not remind you of the history of this wonderful transition — a transition lasting through centuries, from barbarism to civilisation. The story is everywhere more or less the same. First came a period of overthrow, wasting, and destruction. Then,

instead of the fierce tribes retaining their old savage and predatory habits, they show a singular aptitude for change; they settle in the lands which they have overrun; they pass rapidly into what, in comparison with their former state, is a civil order, with laws, rights, and the framework of society. Angles and Saxons and Danes in Britain, Norsemen by sea, and Franks and Burgundians across the Rhine in Gaul, come to ravage and plunder, and stay to found a country; they arrive pirates and destroyers, urged on by a kind of frenzy of war and ruin, a kind of madness against peaceful life; and when the storm in which they come has passed away, we see that in the midst of the confusion they have created the beginnings of new nations; we see the foundations distinctly laid of England, Normandy, and France. And next, when once the barbarian is laid aside, and political community begins, though the early stages may be of the rudest and most imperfect, beset with the remains of old savagery, and sometimes apparently overlaid by it, yet the idea of civil society and government henceforth grows with ever-accelerating force, with ever-increasing influence. It unfolds itself in various forms and with unequal success; but on the whole the development of it, though often retarded and often fitful and irregular, has never been arrested since the time when it began. The tribes of the same stock which continued to occupy the centre of Europe had the same general history as their

foreign brethren. The great events of conquest, the contact of civilisation outside, the formation and policy of new kingdoms, all reacted on the home of the race; Germany became the established seat of an Empire which inherited the name and the claims of Rome, the complement and often the rival of the new spiritual power which ruled in the ancient Imperial city.

Many causes combined to produce this result. The qualities and endowments of the race, possibly their traditional institutions, certainly their readiness to take in new ideas and to adapt themselves to great changes in life and manners; their quickness in seizing, in the midst of wreck and decline, the points which the ancient order presented for building up a new and advancing one; their instinct, wild and untamed as they were, for the advantages of law; their curious power of combining what was Roman and foreign with what was tenaciously held to as Teutonic and ancestral; their energy and manliness of purpose, their unique and unconquerable elasticity of nature, which rose again and again out of what seemed fatal corruption, as it rose out of defeat and overthrow;—all this explains the great transformation of the invading tribes, the marvellous history of modern Europe. It was thus, no doubt, that the elder civilisations of Greece and Rome had arisen out of elements probably once as wild and unpromising as those from which our younger one has sprung; it was thus that, coming

from the mountains and the woods, from the chase or the pasture-grounds, they learned, in ways and steps now hidden from us—

> To create
> A household and a father-land,
> A city and a state.

But the fortunes of the elder and the newer civilisations have hitherto been different in fruit and in permanence, and a force was at work in moulding the latter which was absent from the earlier. The Teutonic race found an unknown and unexpected spiritual power before them, such as early Hellenes and Latins had never known. They found, wherever they came, a strange, organised polity, one and united in a vast brotherhood, coextensive with the Empire, but not *of it*, nor of its laws and institutions; earthly in its outward aspect, but the representative and minister of a perpetual and ever-present kingdom of heaven; unarmed, defenceless in the midst of never-ceasing war, and yet inspiring reverence and receiving homage, and ruling by the word of conviction, of knowledge, of persuasion; arresting and startling the new conquerors with the message of another world. In the changes which came over the invading race, this undreamt-of power, which they met in their career, had the deepest and most eventful share.[1] That

[1] In the new era, the first thing we meet with is the religious society; it was the most advanced, the strongest; whether in the Roman municipality, or at the side of the barbarian kings, or in the

great society, which had half converted the Empire, converted and won over its conquerors. In their political and social development it took the lead in conjunction with their born leaders. Legislation, political and social, the reconstruction of a society in chaos, the fusion of old things with new, the adaptation of the forms, the laws, the traditions of one time to the wants of another, the smoothing of jars, the reconciling of conflicting interests, and still more of conflicting and dimly-grasped ideas, all that laid the foundations and sowed the seeds of civil order in all its diversified shapes, as it was to be, — was the work not only of kings, princes, and emperors, but, outwardly as much, morally much more, of

graduated ranks of the conquerors who have become lords of the land, everywhere we observe the presence and the influence of the Church. From the fourth to the thirteenth century it is the Church which always marches in the front rank of civilisation. I must call your attention to a fact which stands at the head of all others, and characterises the Christian Church in general—a fact which, so to speak, has decided its destiny. This fact is the unity of the Church, the unity of the Christian society, irrespectively of all diversities of time, of place, of power, of language, of origin. Wonderful phenomenon ! It is just at the moment when the Roman Empire is breaking up and disappearing that the Christian Church gathers itself up and takes its definitive form. Political unity perishes, religious unity emerges. Populations endlessly different in origin, habits, speech, destiny, rush upon the scene ; all becomes local and partial ; every enlarged idea, every general institution, every great social arrangement is lost sight of ; and in this moment this Christian Church proclaims most loudly the unity of its teaching, the universality of its law. And from the bosom of the most frightful disorder the world has ever seen has arisen the largest and purest idea, perhaps, which ever drew men together,—the idea of a spiritual society.—*Guizot*, Lec. xii. p. 230.

the priests, bishops, and councils of the Christian Church.

These results and their efficient causes are in a general way beyond dispute. But can we trace, besides these political and social changes, any ethical changes of corresponding importance? Such changes, of course, there must have been, in populations altering from one state to another, where the interval between these states is so enormous as that between uncivilised and civilised life. But it is conceivable, though, of course, not likely, that they might have been of little interest to those who care about human goodness and the development of the moral side of human nature. China has passed into a remarkable though imperfect civilisation, but without perceptible moral rise. Or the changes may be perceptible only in individual instances, and not on that large scale which we take when we speak of national character. Do we see in the Teutonic races changes analogous to those which we believe we can trace in the Greek and the Latin races since they passed under the discipline of Christianity?

I think we can. We must remember that we are on ground where our generalisations can but approximate to the true state of the case, and that when we speak of national character we speak of a thing which, though very striking at a distance and in gross, is vague and tremulous in its outlines, and in detail is full of exceptions and contradictory instances. Come

too near it, and try to hold it too tightly, and it seems to elude our grasp, or, just when we have seized a distinct thought, to escape from us. We are made to feel by objectors that what is shared by so many individual and definite characters, and shared in such endlessly varying proportions, must be looked upon more as an ideal than as anything definitely and tangibly realised. And, again, when we speak of something common to the Teutonic race, we must remember the differences between its different great branches,—in Germany, in the Netherlands, in the Scandinavian countries, in England and its colonies. But for all that, there seem to be some common and characteristic features recognisable in all of them, in distinction from the Latin or Latinised races; gifts and qualities to be found, of course, in individuals of the other races, but not prominent in a general survey; ideals if you like, but ideals which all who are under the ordinary impressions of the race welcome as expressing what they think the highest and presuppose as their standard. There must be some reality attaching to such ideals, or they would never have become ideals to which men delight to look. Fully admitting all the reserves and abatements necessary, we can speak of general points of character in the Teutonic race and try to trace their formation.

There is a great and important difference in the conditions under which Christianity came to the dif-

ferent populations of the old world. To Greeks and to Latins it came as to people who had long been under a civilisation of a high order, whose habits and ideas were formed by it, and who had gone further in all that it can do for men than had ever been known in the world before. To the Teutonic races, on the contrary, it came when they had still to learn almost the first elements of civilised life; and it was along with Christian teaching that they learned them. It took them fresh from barbarism, and was the fountain and the maker of their civilisation. There was yet another difference. Christianity gained its hold on the Greeks and Romans in the time of their deep disasters, in the overthrow and breaking up of society, amid the suffering and anguish of hopeless defeat. It came to them as conquered, subjugated, down-trodden races, in the lowest ebb of their fortunes. It came to the Teutonic races as to conquerors, flushed with success, in the mounting flood of their new destiny. In one case it had to do with men cast down from their high estate, stricken and reeling under the unexampled judgments of God; it associated itself with their sorrows; it awoke and deepened in them the consciousness of the accumulated and frightful guilt of ages; it unlocked and subdued their hearts by its inexhaustible sympathy and awful seriousness; it rallied and knit them once more together in their helplessness into an unearthly and eternal citizenship; it was their one and great

consoler in the miseries of the world. In the Christian literature of the falling Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries, in such books as St. Augustine's *City of God*, or Salvian's book on the *Government of God*, we may see, in its nascent state, the influence of Christianity on the shattered and afflicted race which had once been the lords of the world. But with the new nations which had arisen to be their masters the business of Christianity and the Church was not so much to comfort as to tame. They had not yet the deep sins of civilisation to answer for. The pains and sorrows of all human existence had not to them been rendered more acute by the habits, the knowledge, the intense feeling of refined and developed life. They suffered, of course, like all men, and they sinned like all men. But to them the ministry of Christianity was less to soothe suffering, less even, as with the men of the Roman world, to call to repentance for sins against conscience and light, than to lay hold on fresh and impetuous natures; to turn them from the first in the right direction; to control and regenerate noble instincts; to awaken conscience; to humble pride; to curb luxuriant and self-reliant strength; to train and educate and apply to high ends the force of powerful wills and masculine characters. And, historically, this appears to have been its earliest work with its Teutonic converts. The Church is their schoolmaster, their legislator, their often considerate, and sometimes over-indulgent, but always resolute, minister of discip-

line. Of course, as time went on, this early office was greatly enlarged and diversified. But it seems to me that the effects of Christianity on their national character, as it was first forming under religious influences, are to be traced to the conditions under which those influences were first exerted.

I have said that the great obvious change observable in the Latin nations since they passed under Christianity seemed to me to be the development of the affections; the depths of the heart were reached and touched as they never were before; its fountains were unsealed. In the same school the German races were made by degrees familiar with the most wonderful knowledge given *here* to man to know,—an insight into the depths of his own being, the steady contemplation of the secrets, the mysteries, the riddles of his soul and his life. They learned this lesson first from Latin teachers, who had learned it themselves in the Psalms, the Gospels, the Epistles of St. Paul and St. John, and in whom thought had stirred the deepest emotions, and kindled spontaneously into the new language of religious devotion. How profoundly this affected the unfolding character of the Teutonic peoples; how the tenderness, the sweetness, the earnestness, the solemnity, the awfulness of the Christian faith sank into their hearts, diffused itself through their life, allied itself by indestructible bonds with what was dearest and what was highest, with their homes, their assemblies, their crowns, their

graves—all this is marked on their history, and reveals itself in their literature. Among them, as among the Latin races, religion opened new springs in the heart, and made new channels for the affections; channels, as deep, as full, as diversified, in the North as in the South; though they were less on the surface; though they sometimes wanted freedom and naturalness in their flow; though their charm and beauty, as well as their degeneracy or extravagance, forced themselves less on the eye. We may appreciate very variously the forms and phases of religion and religious history in the Northern races. You may find in them the difference, and the difference is immense, ranging between mere vague, imaginative, religious sentiment, and the profoundest convictions of Christian faith. The moment you touch particular questions, instantly the divergences of judgment and sympathy appear, as to what is religion. But the obvious experience of facts and language, and the evidence of foreigners alike attest how, in one form or another, religion has penetrated deeply into the national character both of Germany and England; how serious and energetic is the religious element in it, and with what tenacity it has stood its ground against the direst storms.

But the German stock is popularly credited with an especial value for certain great classes of virtues, of which the germs are perhaps discernible in its early history, but which, in their real nature, have been the

growth of its subsequent experience and training. It is, of course, childish and extravagant to make any claims of this kind without a vast margin for signal exceptions; all that can justly be said is that public opinion has a special esteem and admiration for certain virtues, and that the vices and faults which it specially dislikes are their opposites. And the virtues and classes of virtues which have been in a manner canonised among us, which we hold in honour, not because they are rare, but because they are regarded as congenial and belonging to us,—the virtues our regard for which colours our judgments, if it does not always influence our actions,—are the group of virtues connected with Truth; the virtues of Manliness; the virtues which have relation to Law; and the virtues of Purity.

I mean by the virtues connected with *Truth*, not only the search after what is true, and the speaking of what is known or believed to be true, but the regard generally for what is real, substantial, genuine, solid, which is shown in some portions of the race by a distrust, sometimes extreme, of theories, of intellectual subtleties, of verbal accuracy,—the taste for plainness and simplicity of life and manners and speech,—the strong sense of justice, large, unflinching, consistent; the power and will to be fair to a strong opponent, — the impatience of affectation and pretence; not merely the disgust or amusement, but the deep moral indignation, at shams and imposture,—

the dislike of over-statement and exaggeration; the fear of professing too much; the shame and horror of seeming to act a part; the sacrifice of form to substance; the expectation and demand that a man should say what he really means — say it well, forcibly, elegantly, if he can; but anyhow, rather say it clumsily and awkwardly than say anything *but* what he means, or sacrifice his real thought to his rhetoric. I mean, too, that unforced and honest modesty both of intellect and conduct which comes naturally to any man who takes a true measure of himself and his doings. Under the virtues of *Manliness*, I mean those that belong to a serious estimate of the uses, the capacities, the call of human life; the duty of hard work; the value and jealousy for true liberty; independence of soul, deep sense of responsibility and strength not to shrink from it, steadiness, endurance, perseverance; the power of sustaining cheerfully disappointment and defeat; the temper not to make much of trifles, whether vexations or pleasures. I include that great self-commanding power, to which we give the name of moral courage; which makes a man who knows and measures all that his decision involves, not afraid to be alone against numbers; not afraid, when he knows that he is right, of the consciousness of the disapprobation of his fellows, of the face, the voice, the frown, the laugh, of those against him;—moral courage, by which a man holds his own judgment, if reason and conscience bid

him, against his own friends, against his own side, and of which, perhaps, the highest form is that by which he is able to resist, not the sneers and opposition of the bad, but the opinion and authority of the good. All these are such qualities as spring from the deep and pervading belief that this life is a place of trial, probation, discipline, effort, to be followed by a real judgment. I mean by the virtues having relation to *Law*, the readiness to submit private interests and wishes to the control of public authority; to throw a consecration around the unarmed forms and organs of this authority; to obey for conscience sake, and out of a free and loyal obedience, and not from fear: the self-control, the patience, which, in spite of the tremendous inequalities and temptations of human conditions, keep society peacefully busy; which enable men, even under abuses, wrong, provocation, to claim a remedy and yet wait for it; which makes them have faith in the ultimate victory of right and sound reason; which teaches men in the keen battles of political life, as it has been said, to "quarrel by rule"; which instinctively recoils from revolution under the strongest desire for change. The phrase, a "law-abiding" people, may as a boast be sometimes very rudely contradicted by facts; but it expresses an idea and a standard. I add the virtues of *Purity*— not forgetting how very little any race or people can venture to boast over its neighbours for its reverence and faithfulness to these high laws of God and man's

true nature; but remembering also all that has made family life so sacred and so noble among us; all that has made German and English households such schools of goodness in its strongest and its gentlest forms, such shrines of love, and holiness, and peace, the secret places where man's deepest gladness and deepest griefs —never, in truth, very far apart—meet and are sheltered. These are things which, in different proportions and different degrees of perfection, we believe to have marked the development of character in the German races. I do not say, far indeed from it, that all this is to be seen among us,—that we *do* according to all this; but I do say that we always honour it, always acknowledge it our only allowable standard.

These things are familiar enough. But it is not always so familiar to us to measure the immense interval between these types of character and the rude primitive elements out of which they have been moulded, or to gauge the force of the agencies which laid hold of those elements, when it was quite within the compass of possibility that they might have received an entirely different impulse and direction;—agencies which turned their wild, aimless, apparently untameable, energies from their path of wasting and ruin, into courses in which they were slowly to be fashioned anew to the highest uses and purposes of human life. There is nothing inconceivable in the notion that what the invading tribes were in their original seats for centuries they might have continued

to be in their new conquests; that the invasion might have been simply the spread and perpetuation of a hopeless and fatal barbarism. As it was, a long time passed before it was clear that barbarism had not taken possession of the world. But the one power which could really cope with it, the one power to which it would listen, which dared to deal with these terrible newcomers with the boldness and frankness given by conviction and hope, was the Christian Church. It had in its possession, influence, ideas, doctrines, laws, of which itself knew not the full regenerating power. We look back to the early acts and policy of the Church towards the new nations, their kings and their people; the ways and works of her missionaries and lawgivers, Ulfilas among the Goths, Augustine in Kent, Remigius in France, Boniface in Germany, Anschar in the North, the Irish Columban in Burgundy and Switzerland, Benedict at Monte Cassino; or the reforming kings, the Arian Theodoric, the great German Charles, the great English Alfred. Measured by the light and the standards they have helped us to attain to, their methods no doubt surprise, disappoint—it may be, revolt us; and all that we dwell upon is the childishness, or the imperfect morality, of their attempts. But if there is anything certain in history, it is that in these rough communications of the deepest truths, in these often questionable modes of ruling minds and souls, the seeds were sown of all that was to make the hope

and the glory of the foremost nations. They impressed upon men in their strong, often coarse, way that truth was the most precious and most sacred of things,— that truth-seeking, truth-speaking, truth in life, was man's supreme duty,—the enjoyment of it his highest blessedness on earth; and they did this, even though they often fell miserably short of the lesson of their words, even though they sometimes, to gain high ends, turned aside into the convenient, tempting paths of untruth. Truth, as it is made the ultimate ground of religion in the New Testament; Truth, as a thing of reality and not of words; Truth, as a cause to contend for in lifelong struggle, and gladly to die for— this was the new, deep, fruitful idea implanted, at the awakening dawn of thought, in the infant civilisation of the North. It became rooted, strong, obstinate; it bore many and various fruits; it was the parent of fervent, passionate belief—the parent, too, of passionate scepticism; it produced persecution and intolerance; it produced resolute and unsparing reformations, indignant uprisings against abuses and impostures. But this great idea of truth, whatever be its consequences, the assumption of its attainableness, of its preciousness, comes to us, as a popular belief and axiom, from the New Testament, through the word and ministry of the Christian Church, from its first contact with the new races; it is the distinct product of that great claim, for the first time made to all the world by the Gospel, and earnestly responded to by strong and

simple natures—the claim of reality and truth made in the words of Him who said, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."

I have spoken of three other groups of virtues which are held in special regard and respect among us—those connected with manliness and hard work, with reverence for law and liberty, and with pure family life. The rudiments and tendencies out of which these have grown appear to have been early marked in the German races; but they were only rudiments, existing in company with much wilder and stronger elements, and liable, amid the changes and chances of barbarian existence, to be paralysed or trampled out. No mere barbarian virtues could by themselves have stood the trial of having won by conquest the wealth, the lands, the power of Rome. But their guardian was there. What Christianity did for these natural tendencies to good was to adopt them, to watch over them, to discipline, to consolidate them. The energy which warriors were accustomed to put forth in their efforts to conquer, the missionaries and ministers of Christianity exhibited in their enterprises of conversion and teaching. The crowd of unknown saints whose names fill the calendars, and live, some of them, only in the titles of our churches, mainly represent the age of heroic spiritual ventures, of which we see glimpses in the story of St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany; of St. Columban and St. Gall, wandering from Ireland to reclaim the barbarians of the Burgun-

dian deserts and of the shores of the Swiss lakes. It was among men like these—men who were then termed emphatically "men of religion"—that the new races first saw the example of life ruled by a great and serious purpose, which yet was not one of ambition or the excitement of war; a life of deliberate and steady industry, of hard and uncomplaining labour; a life as full of activity in peace, of stout and brave work, as a warrior's was wont to be in the camp, on the march, in the battle. It was in these men, and in the Christianity which they taught, and which inspired and governed them, that the fathers of our modern nations first saw exemplified the sense of human responsibility, first learned the nobleness of a ruled and disciplined life, first enlarged their thoughts of the uses of existence, first were taught the dignity and sacredness of honest toil. These great axioms of modern life passed silently from the special homes of religious employment to those of civil; from the cloisters and cells of men who, when they were not engaged in worship, were engaged in field-work or book-work,—clearing the forest, extending cultivation, multiplying manuscripts,—to the guild of the craftsman, the shop of the trader, the study of the scholar. Religion generated and fed these ideas of what was manly and worthy in man. Once started, they were reinforced from other sources; thought and experience enriched, corrected, and co-ordinated them. But it was the power and sanction of a religion and a creed

which first broke men into their yoke that now seems so easy, gradually wrought their charm over human restlessness and indolence and pride, gradually reconciled mankind to the ideas, and the ideas to mankind, gradually impressed them on that vague but yet real thing which we call the general thought and mind of a nation. It was this, too, that wrought a further and more remarkable change in elevating and refining the old manliness of the race. It brought into the dangerous life of the warrior the sense of a common humanity, the great idea of self-sacrificing duty. It was this religion of mercy and peace, and yet of strength and purpose, which out of the wild and conflicting elements of what we call the age of chivalry gradually formed a type of character in which gentleness, generosity, sympathy were blended with the most daring courage,—the Christian soldier, as we have known him in the sternest tasks and extremest needs, in conquest and in disaster, ruling, judging, civilising. It was the sense of duty derived from this religion to the traditions and habits of a great service, which made strong men stand fast in the face of death, while the weak were saved, on the deck of the sinking *Birkenhead.*

So with respect to law and freedom. I suppose that it may be set down as a characteristic of the race, that in very various degrees and proportions, and moving faster or slower in different places and times, there has been throughout its history the tendency and persistent purpose to hold and secure in combination

*both* these great blessings. Of course there are tracts of history where this demand of the national conscience seems suspended or extinguished; but it has never disappeared for a time, even under German feudalism or despotism, without making itself felt in some shape, and at last reasserting itself in a more definite and advanced form. It involves the jealous sense of personal rights and independence along with deference, respectful, and perhaps fervently loyal, to authority believed to be rightful; a steady obedience to law when law is believed to be just, with an equally steady disposition to resent its injustice. How has this temper been rooted in our race? The quick feelings and sturdy wills of a high-spirited people will account for part, but not for all; where did they learn self-command as well as courage, the determination to be patient as well as inflexible? They learned it in those Christian ideas of man's individual importance and corporate brotherhood and fellowship, those Christian lessons and influences, which we see diffused through the early attempts in these races to state principles of government and lay down rules of law. They learned it in the characteristic and memorable struggles of the best and noblest of the Christian clergy against lawlessness and self-will, whether shown in the license of social manners, or in the tyranny of kings and nobles; in their stout assertion against power and force, of franchises and liberties, which, though in the first instance the privileges of a few, were the seeds of the

rights of all. We see in the clergy a continued effort to bring everything under the sovereignty of settled, authoritative law, circumscribing individual caprice, fencing and guarding individual rights; from them the great conception passed into the minds of the people, into the practice and policy—in time often the wider and more comprehensive policy and practice—of civil legislators and administrators. The interpretation of the great Christian precepts connecting social life and duties with the deepest religious thought passed into the sphere of political principles and order: "to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's";—"let every soul be subject to the higher powers";—"as free, yet not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness"; "God hath set the members in the body as it hath pleased Him . . . and the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." These and such like great rules of order and freedom, coupled with the tremendous words of the Psalms and Prophets against oppression and the pride of greatness, found sympathetic response in Teutonic minds and germinated in them into traditions and philosophical doctrines, the real root of which may be forgotten, but which indeed come down from the Christian education of the barbarian tribes, and to the attempts of their teachers to bring out the high meaning of the Christian teaching about what is due from man to man in the various relations of society. Be it so, that these attempts

were one-sided and crude ones, that the struggles to seize this meaning were often baffled. But all history is the record of imperfect and unrealised ideas; and nothing is more unphilosophical or more unjust than to forget the place and importance which such attempts had in their time, and in the scale of improvement. We criticise the immature and narrow attempts of the ecclesiastical champions of law. Let us not forget that they were made at a time when, but for them, the ideas both of law and of liberty would have perished.

And one more debt our race owes to Christianity —the value and love which it has infused into us for a pure and affectionate and peaceful home. Not that domestic life does not often show itself among the Latin races in very simple and charming forms. But *Home* is specially Teutonic, word and thing. Teutonic sentiment, we know, from very early times, was proud, elevated, even austere, in regard to the family and the relations of the sexes. This nobleness of heathenism, Christianity consecrated and transformed into all the beautiful shapes of household piety, household affection, household purity. The life of Home has become the great possession, the great delight, the great social achievement of our race; its refuge from the storms and darkness without, an ample compensation to us for so much that we want of the social brilliancy and enjoyment of our Latin brethren. Reverence for the household and for household life, a high sense of its

duties, a keen relish for its pleasures, this has been a strength to German society amid much to unsettle it. The absence of this taste for the quiet and unexcited life of home is a formidable symptom in portions of our race across the Atlantic. And when home life, with its sanctities, its simplicity, its calm and deep joys and sorrows, ceases to have its charm for us in England, the greatest break-up and catastrophe in English history will not be far off.

And now to end. I have endeavoured to point out how those great groups of common qualities which we call national character have been in certain leading instances profoundly and permanently affected by Christianity. Christianity addresses itself primarily and directly to individuals. In its proper action, its purpose and its business is to make men saints; what it has to do with souls is far other, both in its discipline and its scope, from what it has to do with nations or societies. Further, its effect on national characteristics must be consequent on its effect on individuals; an effluence from the separate persons whom it has made its own, the outer undulations from centres of movement and tendency in single hearts and consciences. Of course such effects are quite distinct; they differ in motive, in intensity, in shape, and form. What is immediate and full in the one case is secondary and imperfect in the other, largely mixed and diluted with qualifying, perhaps hostile, influences. But nations really have their fortunes and history

independently of the separate individuals composing them; they have their faults, their virtues, their crimes, their fate; and so in this broad, loose, and yet not unreal way, they have their characters. Christianity, which spoke at first to men one by one, went forth a high Imperial power, into the "wilderness of the people," and impressed itself on nations. Christianity, by its public language and public efforts, made man infinitely more interesting to man than ever he was before. Doubtless, the impression was much more imperfect, inconsistent, equivocal, than in the case of individuals. But for all that, the impression, within its own conditions and limits, was real, was strong, was lasting. Further—and this is my special point now,—it was of great importance. National character is indeed a thing of *time*, shown on the stage of this earthly and transitory scene, adapted to it and partaking of its incompleteness. The interests, the perfection of souls, are of another order. But nothing can be unimportant which affects in any way the improvement, the happiness, the increased hopes of man, in any stage of his being. And nations and societies, with their dominant and distinguishing qualities, are the ground on which souls grow up, and have their better or worse chance, as we speak, for the higher discipline of inward religion. It is all-important how habits receive their bias, how the controlling and often imperious rules of life are framed; with what moral assumptions men start in their course. It is very

important to us, as individuals, whether or not we grow up in a society where polygamy and slavery are impossible, where veracity is exacted, where duelling is discountenanced, where freedom, honour, chastity, readiness for effort and work, are treated as matters of course in those with whom we live.

We have seen that Christianity is very different in its influence on different national characters. It has wrought with nations as with men. For it does not merely gain their adherence, but within definite limits it develops differences of temperament and mind. Human nature has many sides, and under the powerful and fruitful influence of Christianity these sides are brought out in varying proportions. Unlike Mahometanism, which seems to produce a singularly uniform monotony of character in races, however naturally different, on which it gets a hold, Christianity has been in its results, viewed on a large scale, as singularly diversified — not only diversified, but incomplete. It has succeeded, and it has failed. For it has aimed much higher, it has demanded much more, it has had to reckon with far more subtle and complicated obstacles. If it had mastered its special provinces of human society as Mahometanism has mastered Arabs and Turks, the world would be very different from what it is. Yes; it has fallen far short of that completeness. The fruits of its power and discipline have been partial. It is open to any one, and easy enough, to point out the shortcomings of

saints; and, much more, the faults and vices of Christian nations. But the lesson of history, I think, is this: *not* that all the good which might have been hoped for to society has followed from the appearance of Christian religion in the forefront of human life; *not* that in this wilful and blundering world, so full of misused gifts and wasted opportunities and disappointed promise, mistake and mischief have never been in its train; *not* that in the nations where it has gained a footing it has mastered their besetting sins, the falsehood of one, the ferocity of another, the characteristic sensuality, the characteristic arrogance of others. But history teaches us this: that in tracing back the course of human improvement we come, in one case after another, upon Christianity as the source from which improvement derived its principle and its motive; we find no other source adequate to account for the new spring of amendment; and, without it, no other sources of good could have been relied upon. It was not only the strongest element of salutary change, but one *without* which others would have had no chance. And, in the next place, the least and most imperfect instance of what it has done has this unique quality—that Christianity carries within it a self-correcting power, ready to act whenever the will arrives to use this power; that it suggests improvement, and furnishes materials for a further step to it. What it has done *anywhere*, what it has done where it has done most, leaves much to

do; but *everywhere* it leaves the ground gained on which to do it, and the ideas to guide the reformer in doing it. We should be cowards to think that those mighty and beneficent powers which won this ground for us, and produced these ideas in dark and very unhappy times, cannot in our happier days accomplish even more. Those ancient and far-distant ages, which have been occupying our attention here for a little while, amid the pressure and strain of our busy present, we may, we ought, to leave far behind, in what we hope to achieve. But in our eagerness for improvement, it concerns us to be on our guard against the temptation of thinking that we can have the fruit or the flower and yet destroy the root; that we may retain the high view of human nature which has grown with the growth of Christian nations, and discard that revelation of Divine love and human destiny of which that view forms a part or a consequence; that we may retain the moral energy, and yet make light of the faith that produced it. It concerns us to remember, amid the splendours and vastness of a nature, and of a social state, which to *us*, as individuals, are both so transitory, that first and above everything we are moral and religious beings, trusted with will, made for immortality. It concerns us that we do not despise our birthright, and cast away our heritage of gifts and of powers, which we may lose, but not recover.

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